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NOV. 26, 2007

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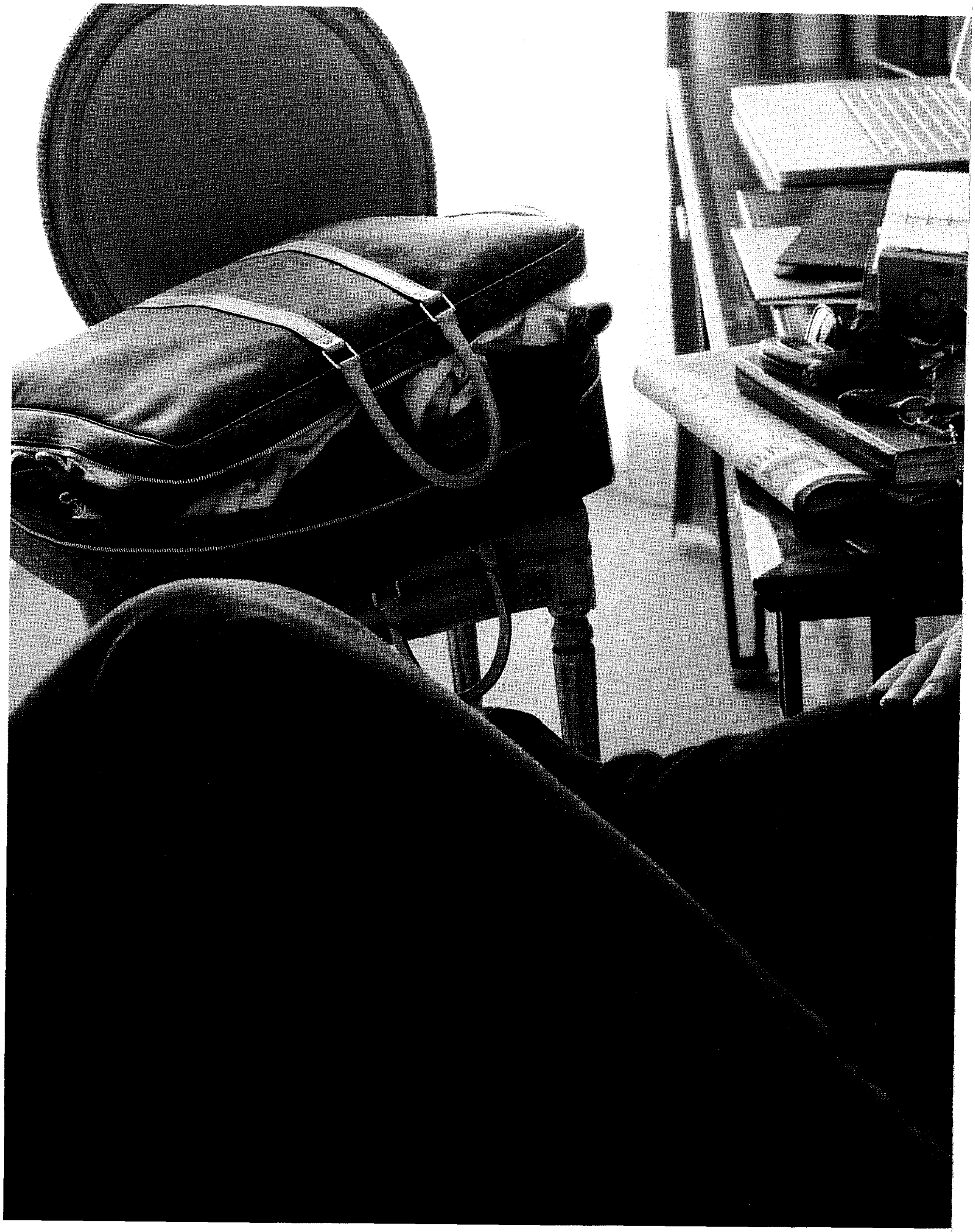

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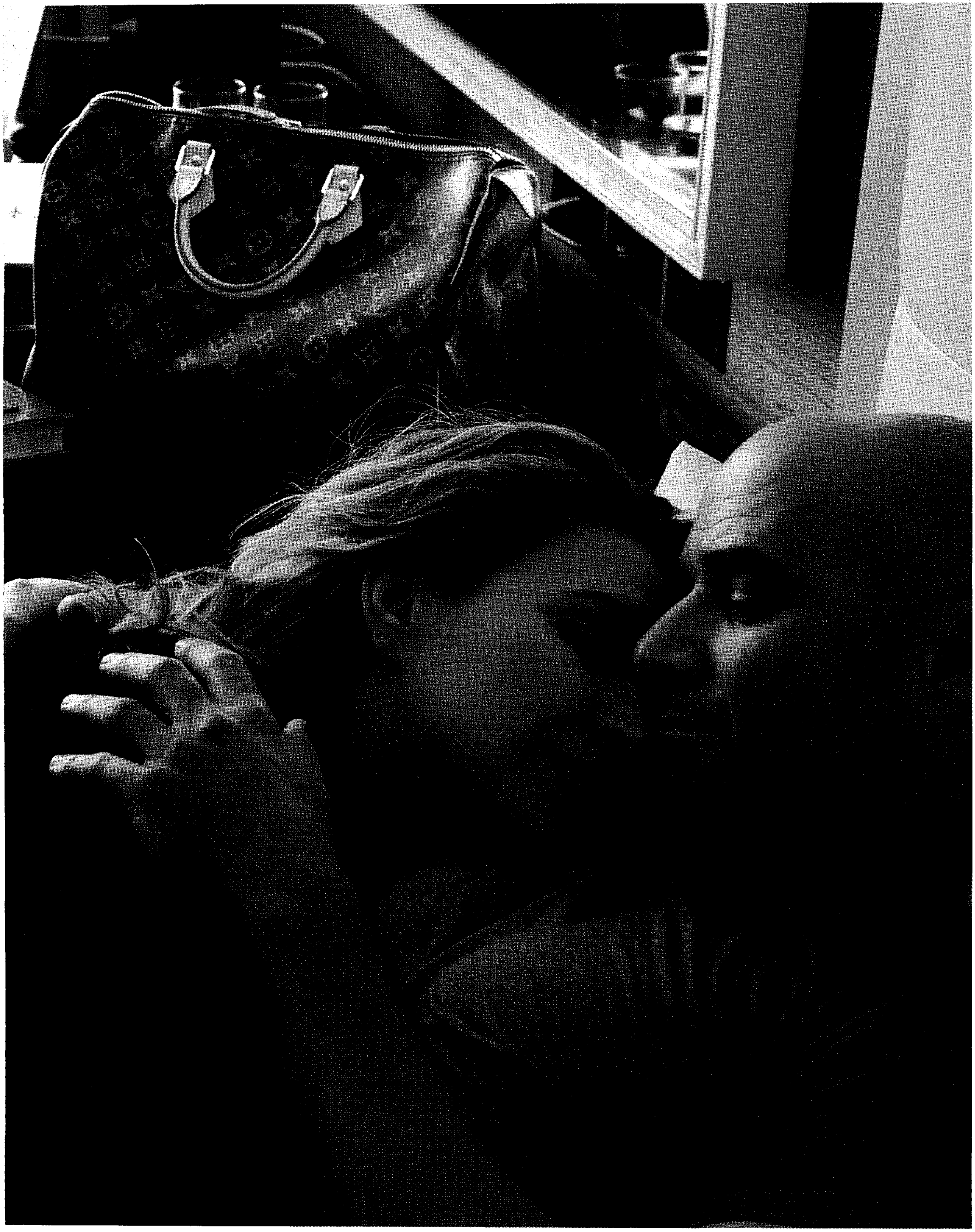

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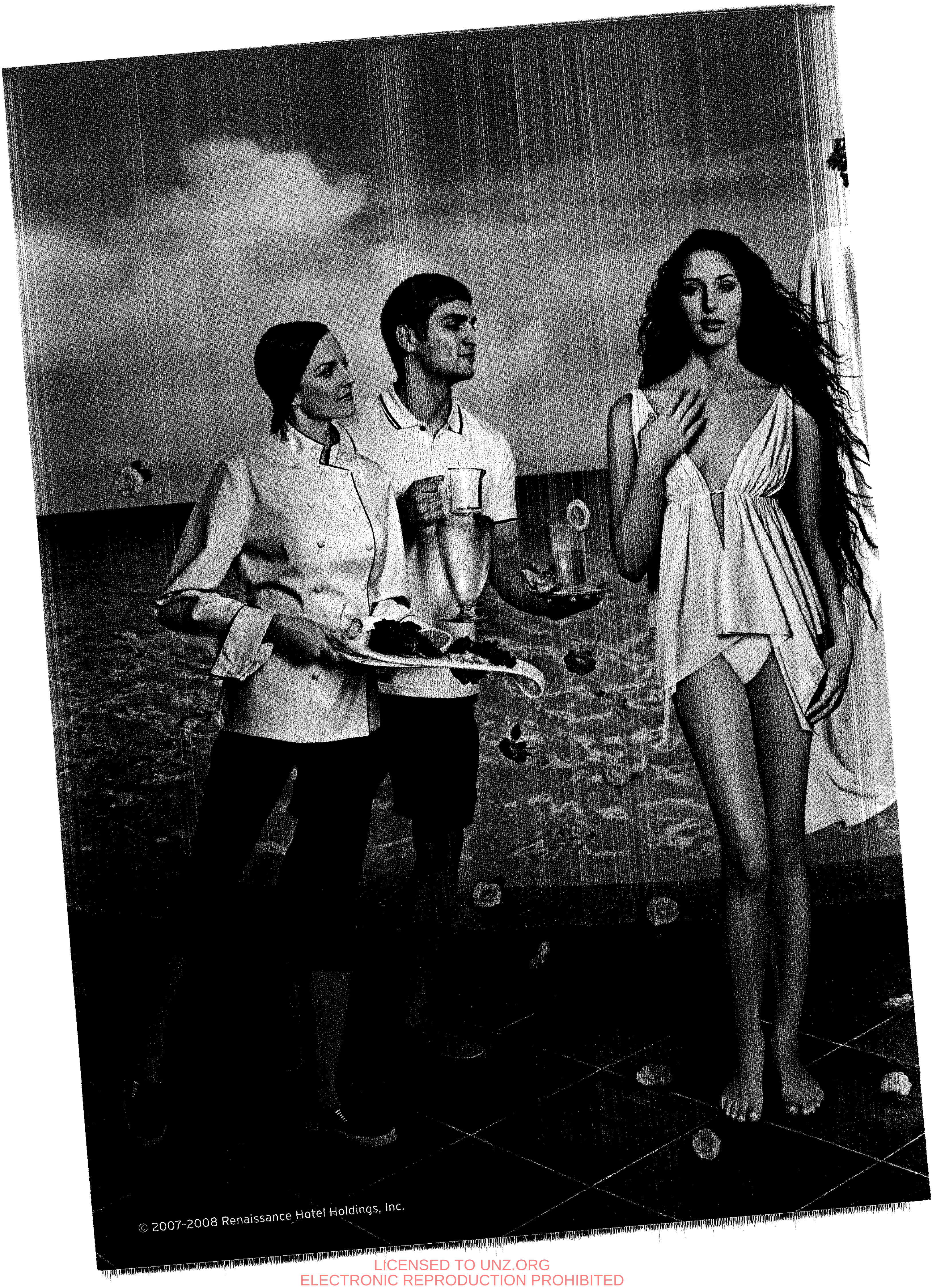

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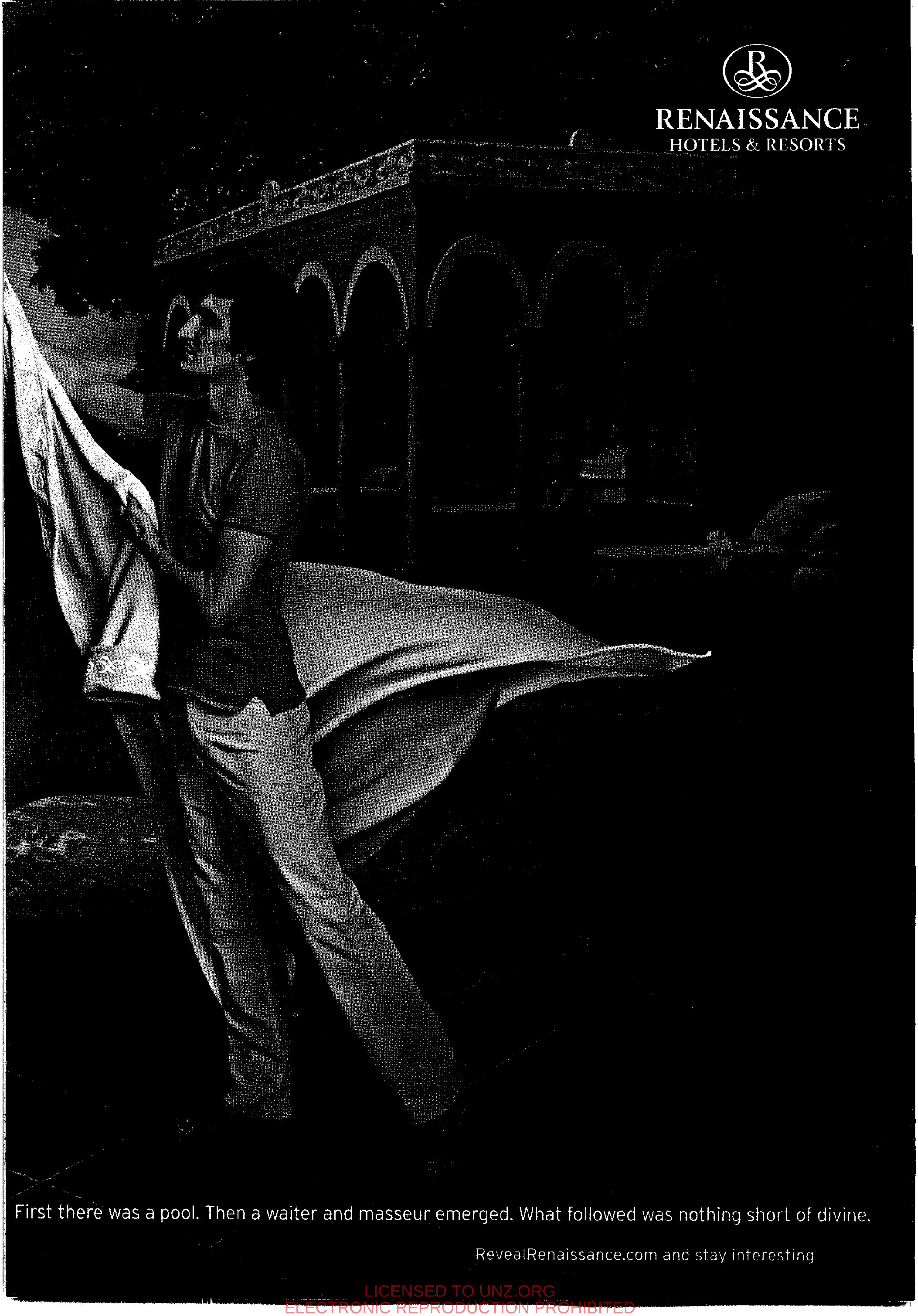

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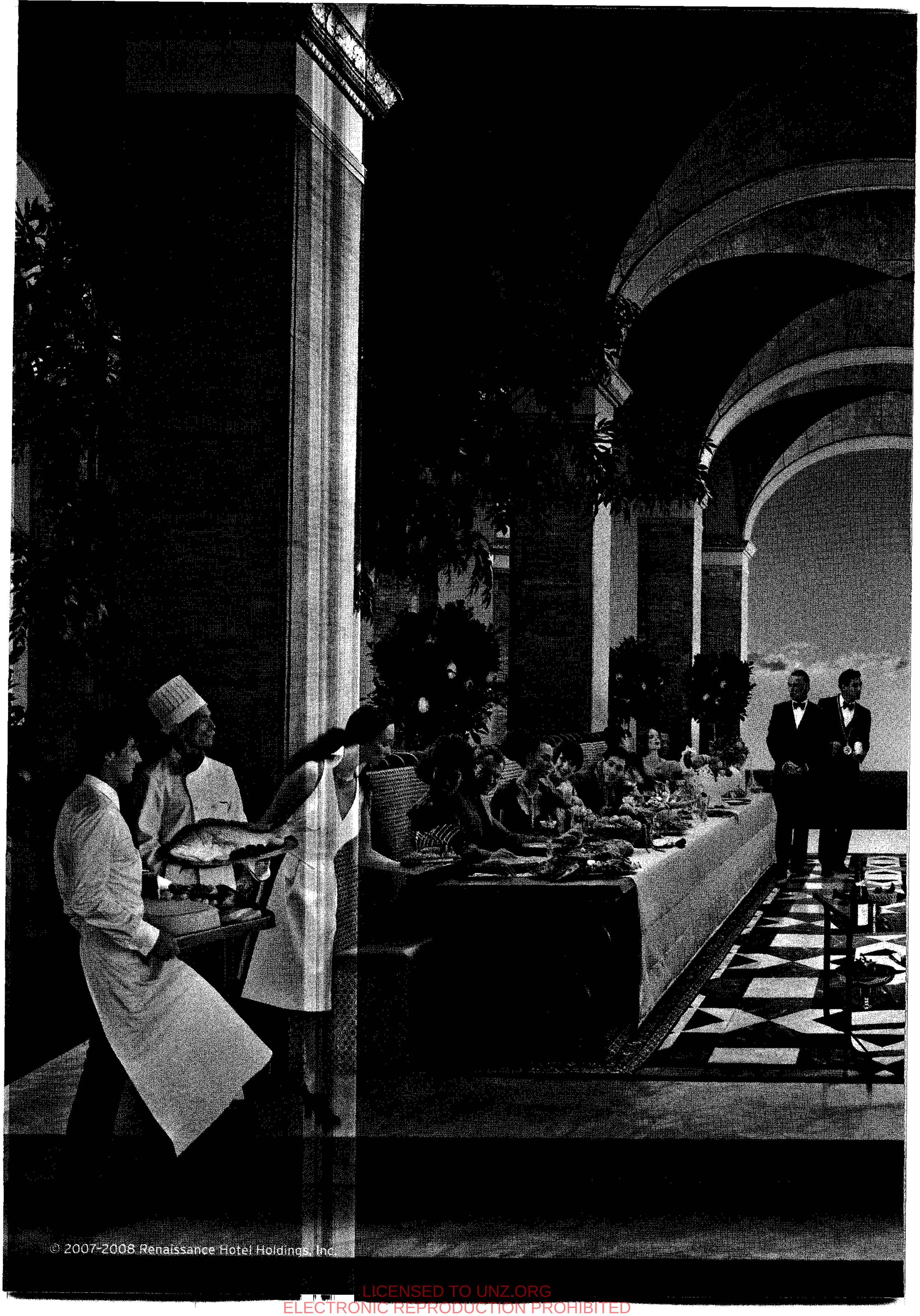

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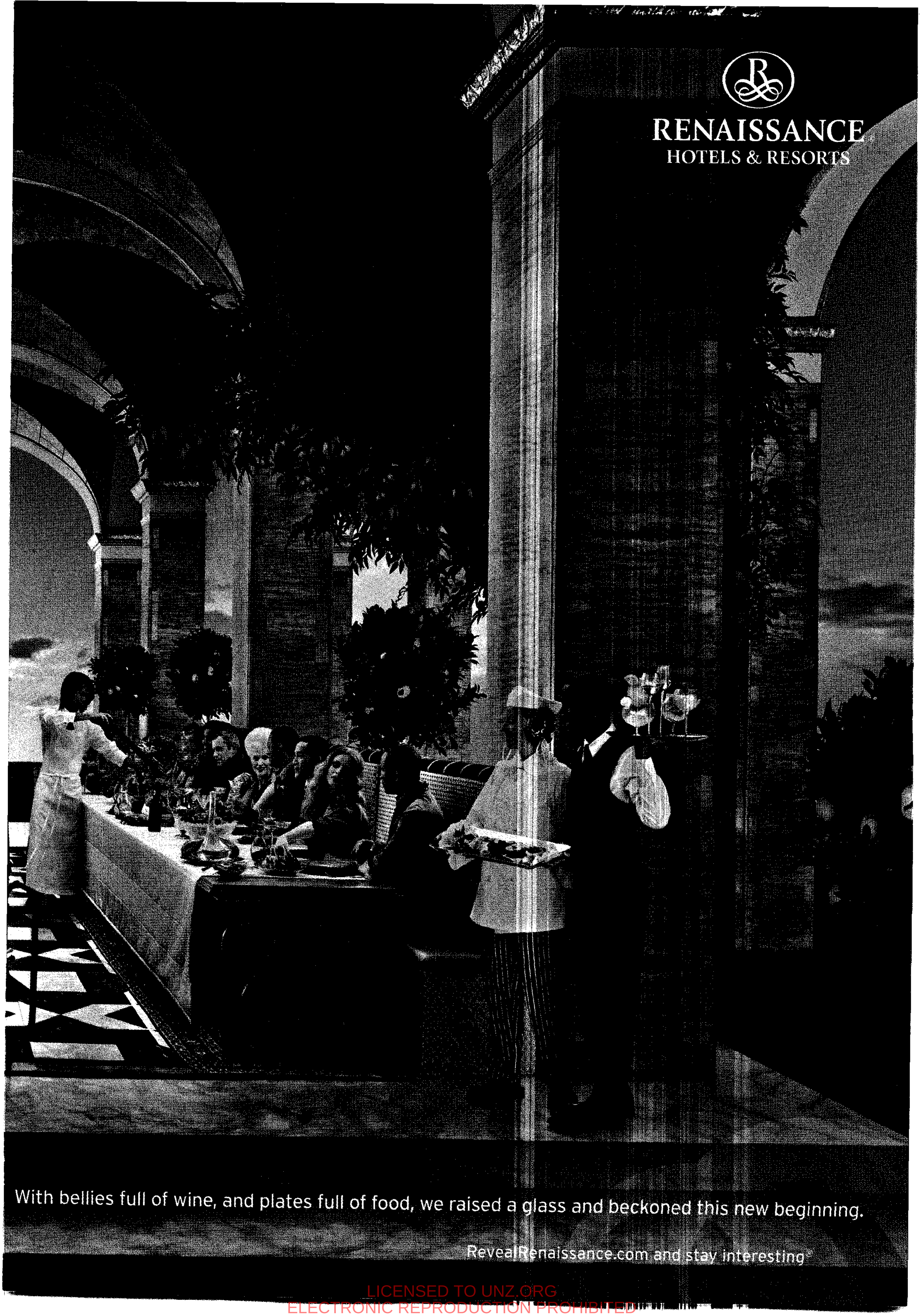
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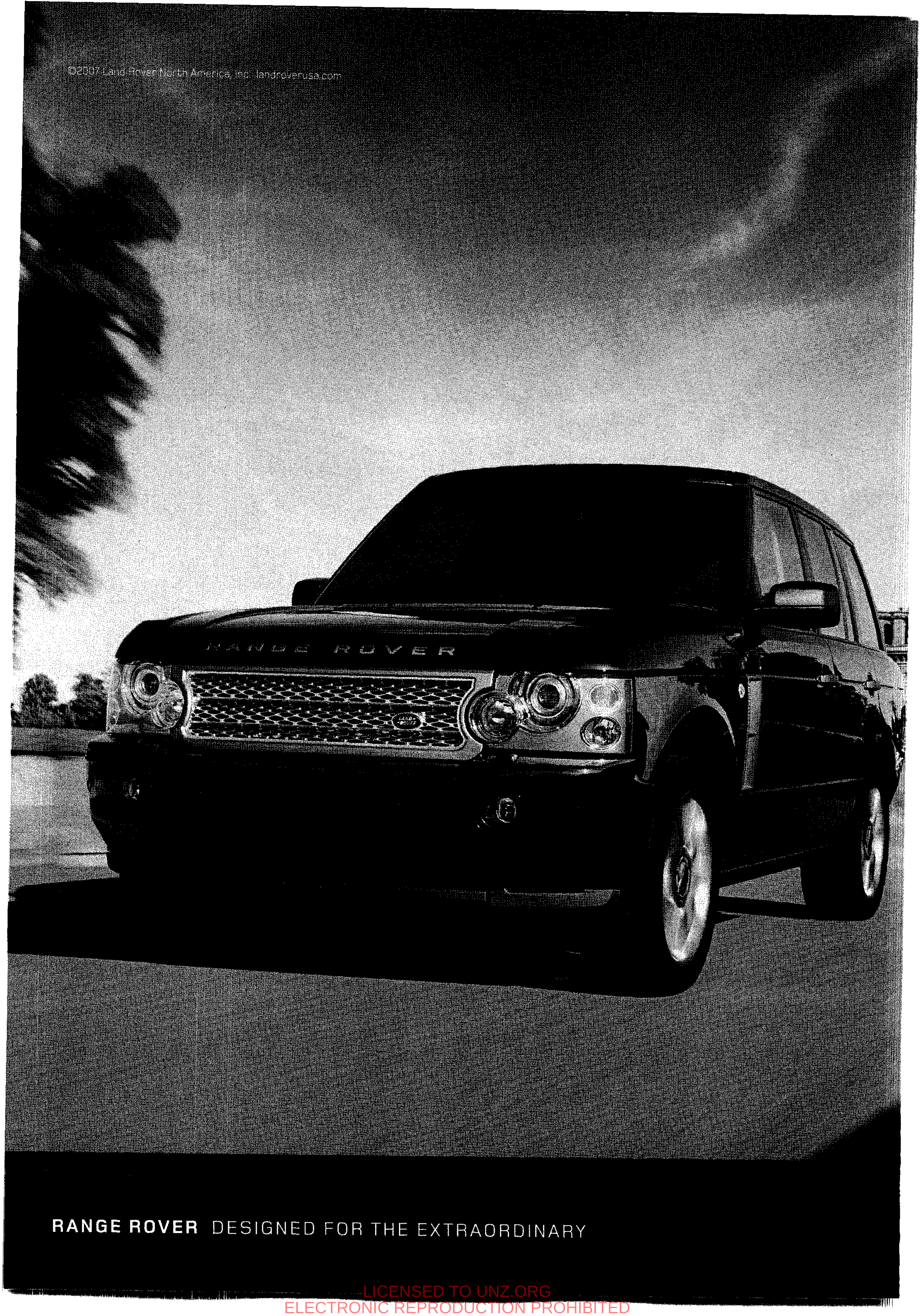
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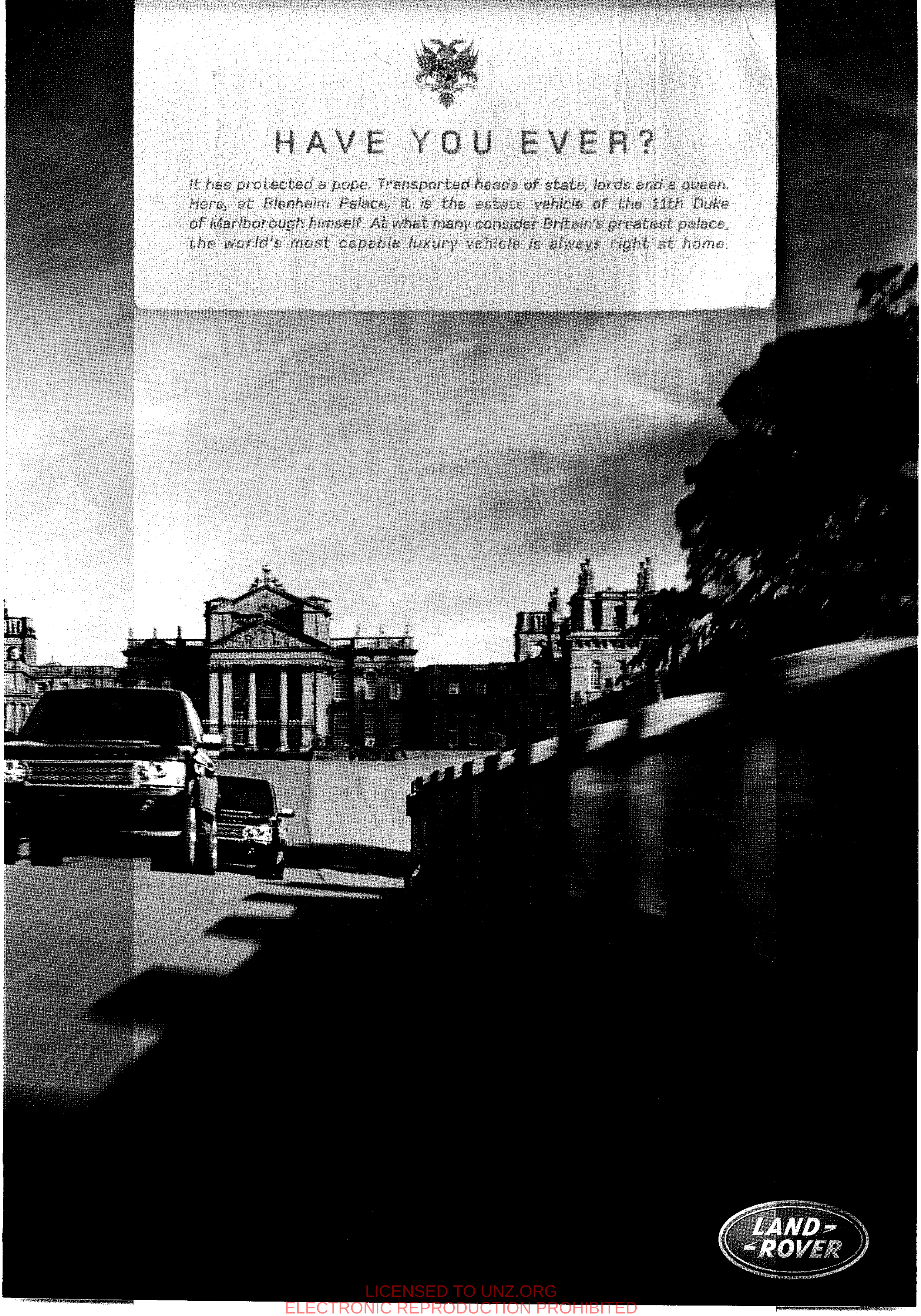

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THE NEW YORKER
THE CARTOON ISSUE

NOVEMBER 26, 2007

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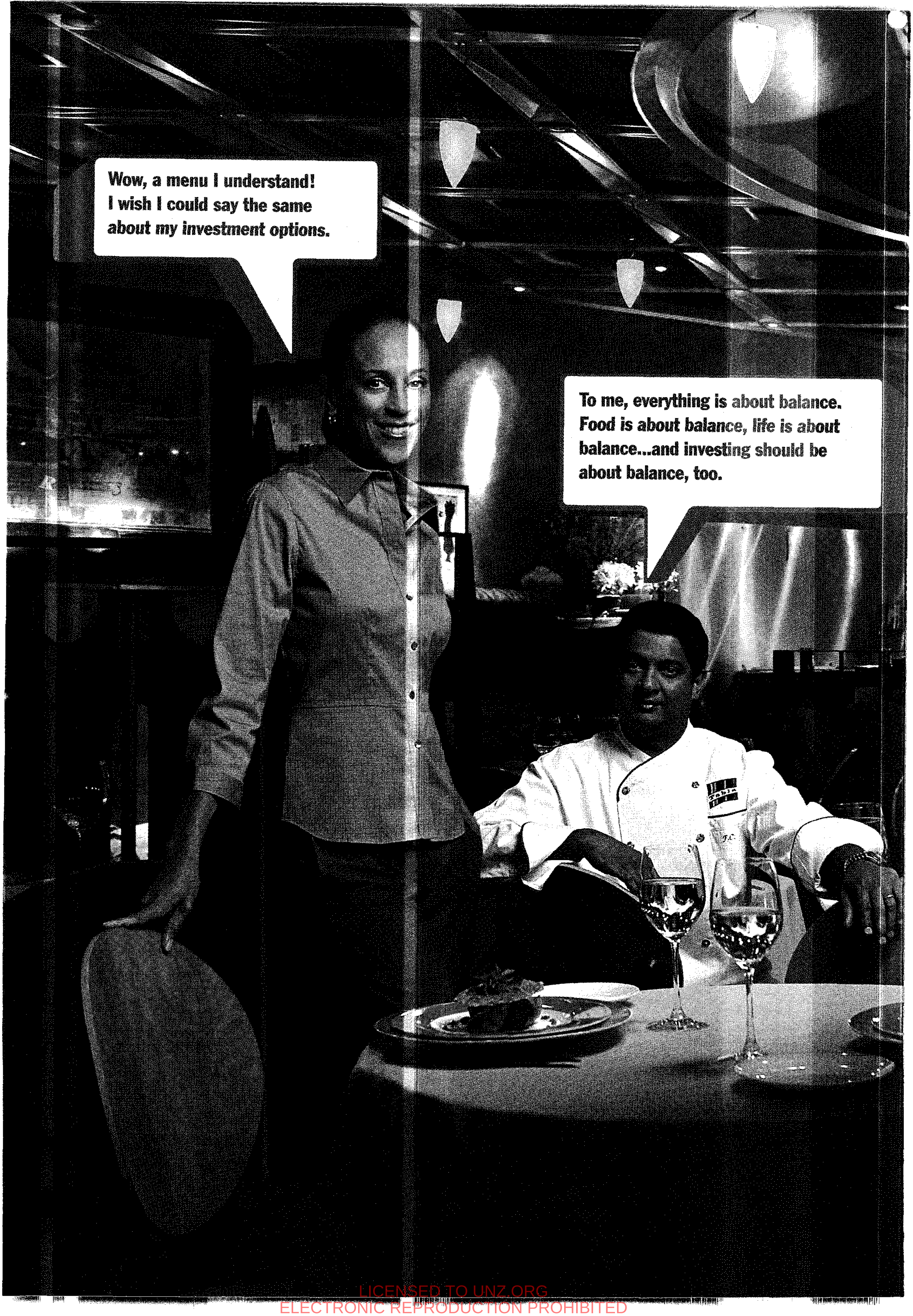
Is your investment firm "out to lunch" when it comes to what really matters to you?

TALK TO CHUCK

charles SCHWAB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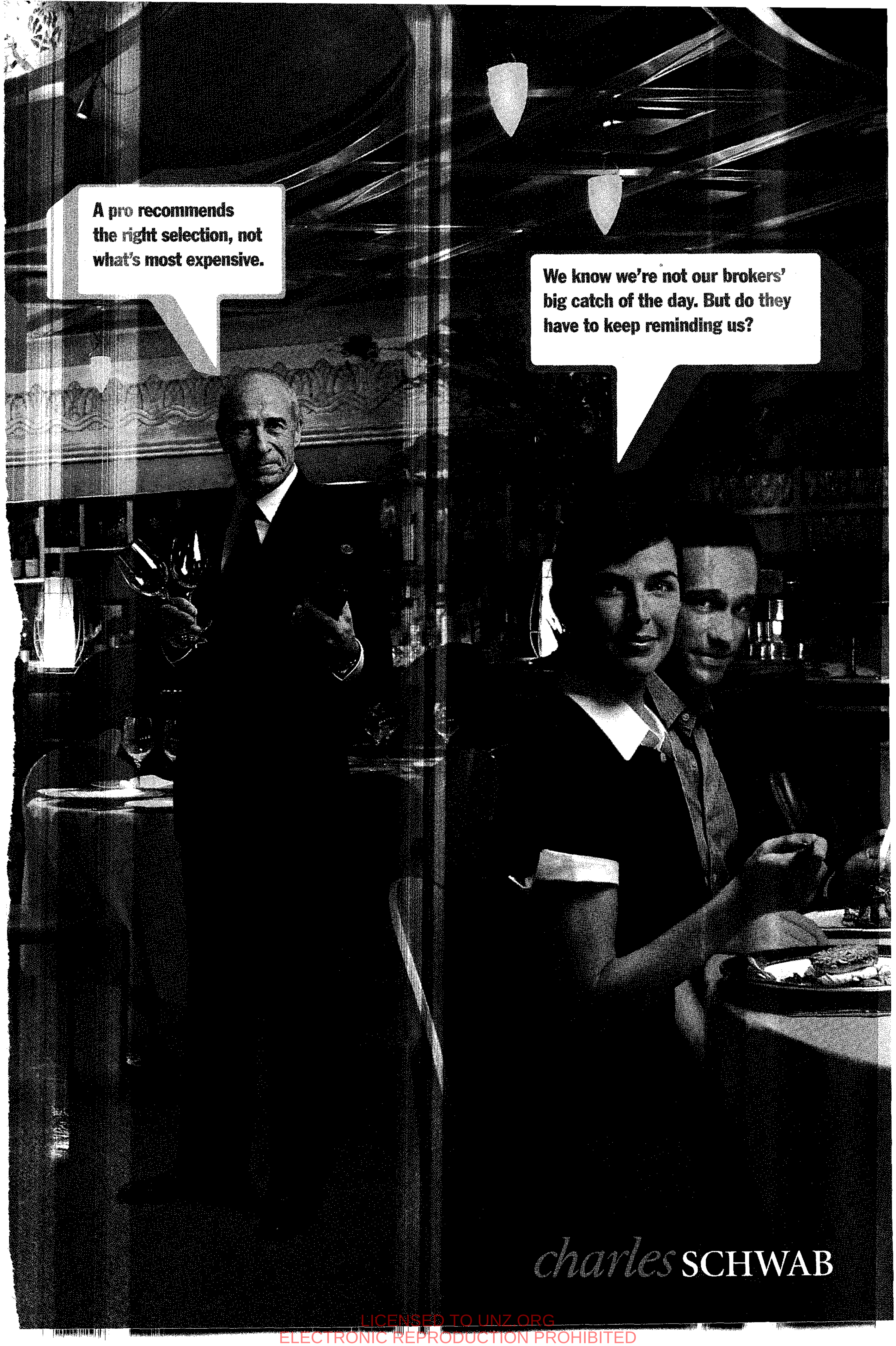
A pro recommends the right selection, not what's most expensive.
We know we're not our brokers' big catch of the day. But do they have to keep reminding us?
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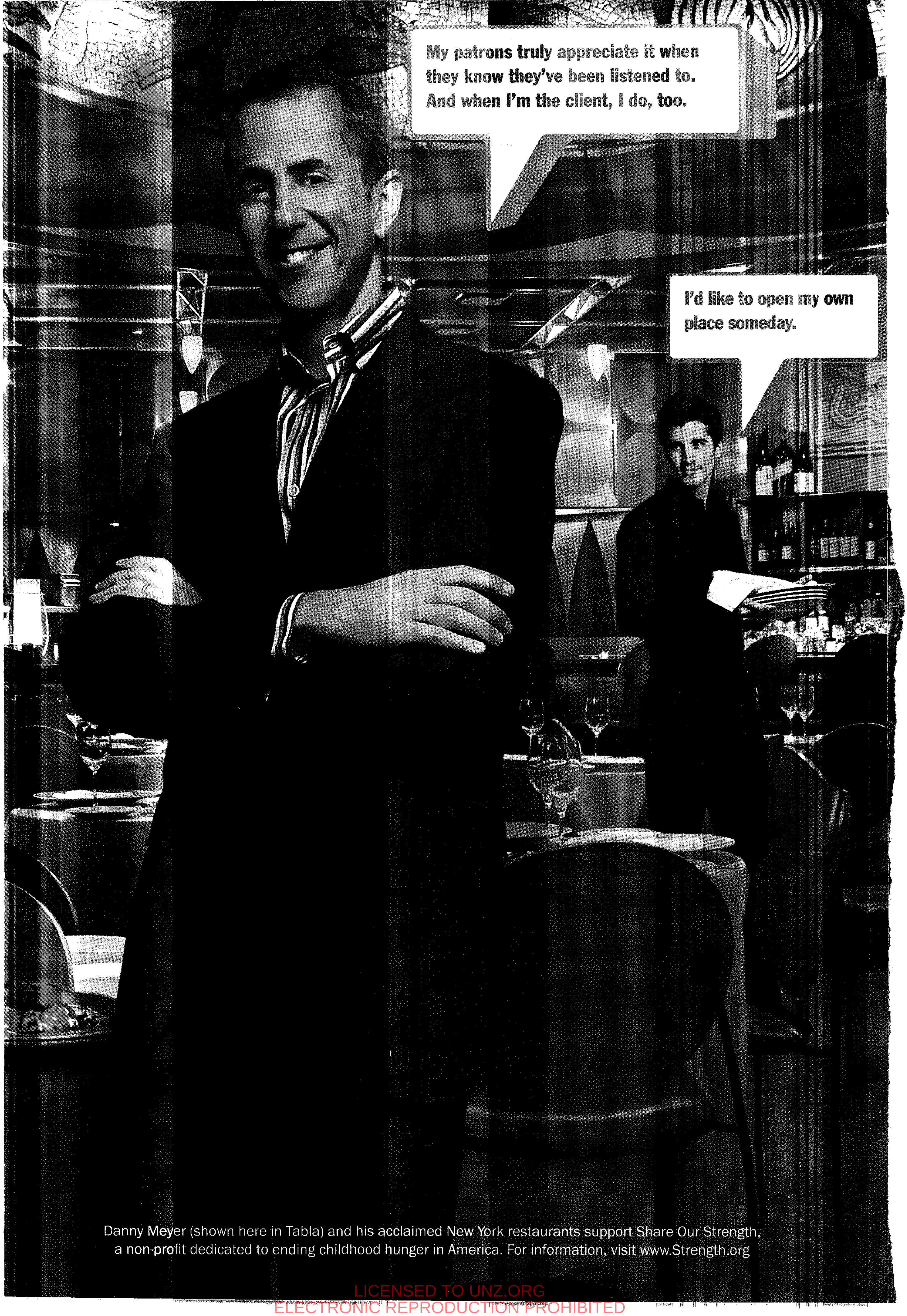
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Danny Meyer (shown here in Tabla) and his acclaimed New York restaurants support Share Our Strength, a non-profit dedicated to ending childhood hunger in America. For information, visit www.Strength.org

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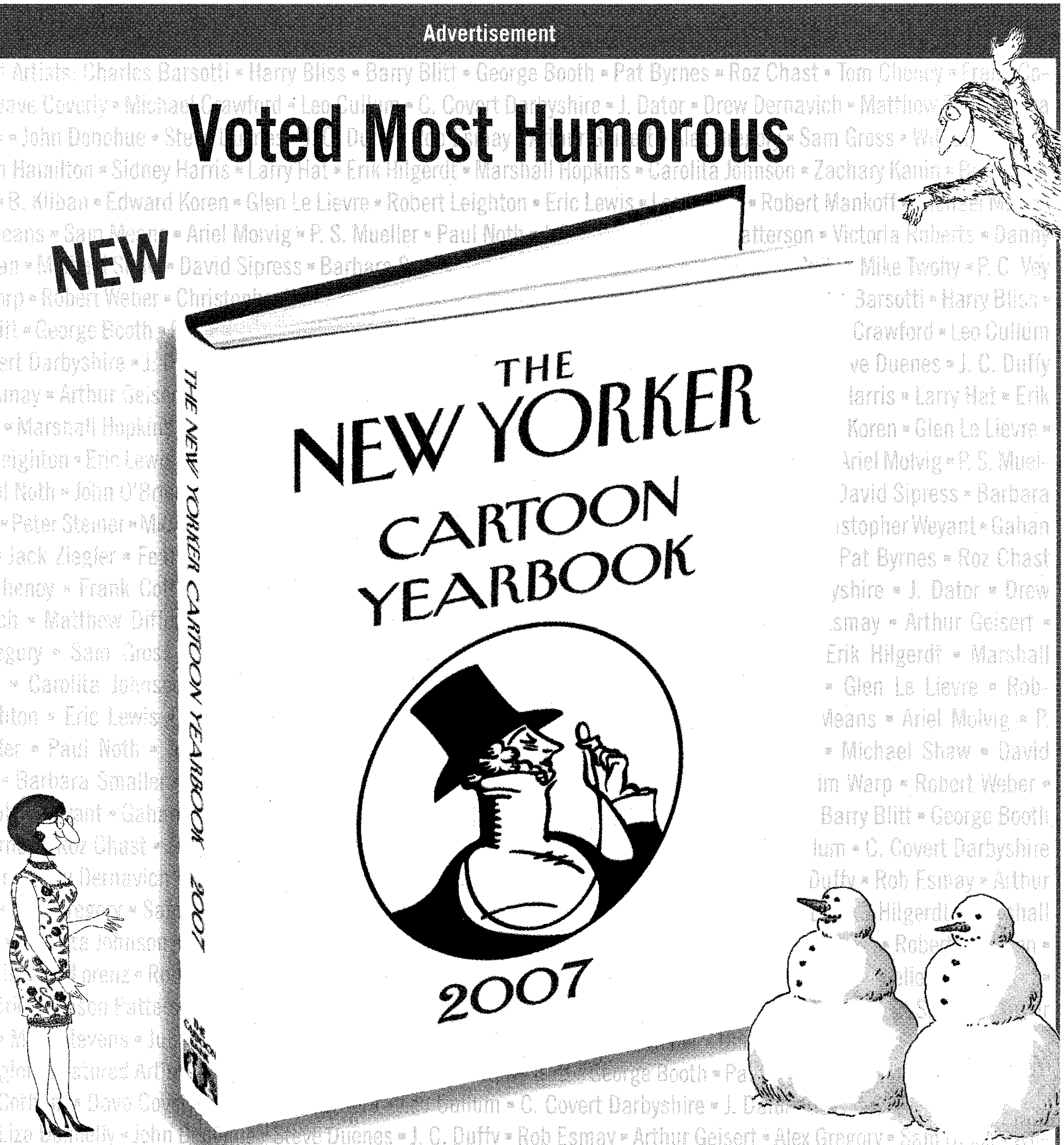
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Anthony Lane 173 THE CURRENT CINEMA
"I'm Not There," "The Mist."

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"A Clear Conscience"

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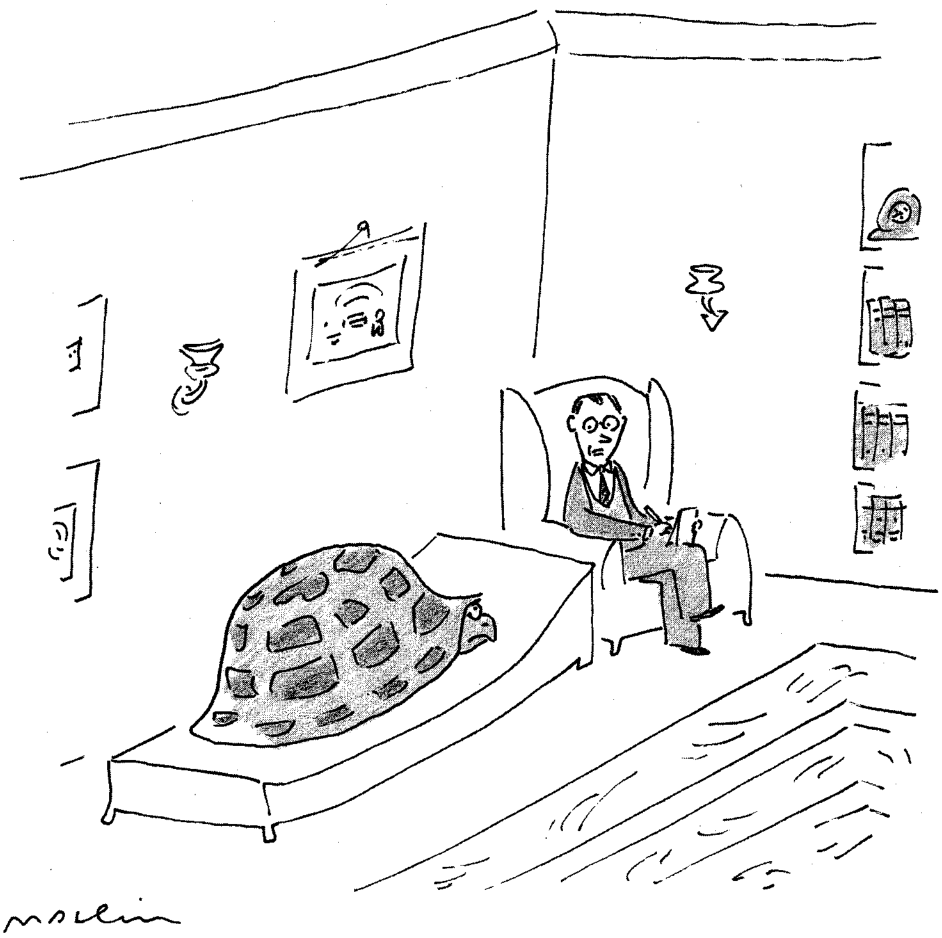
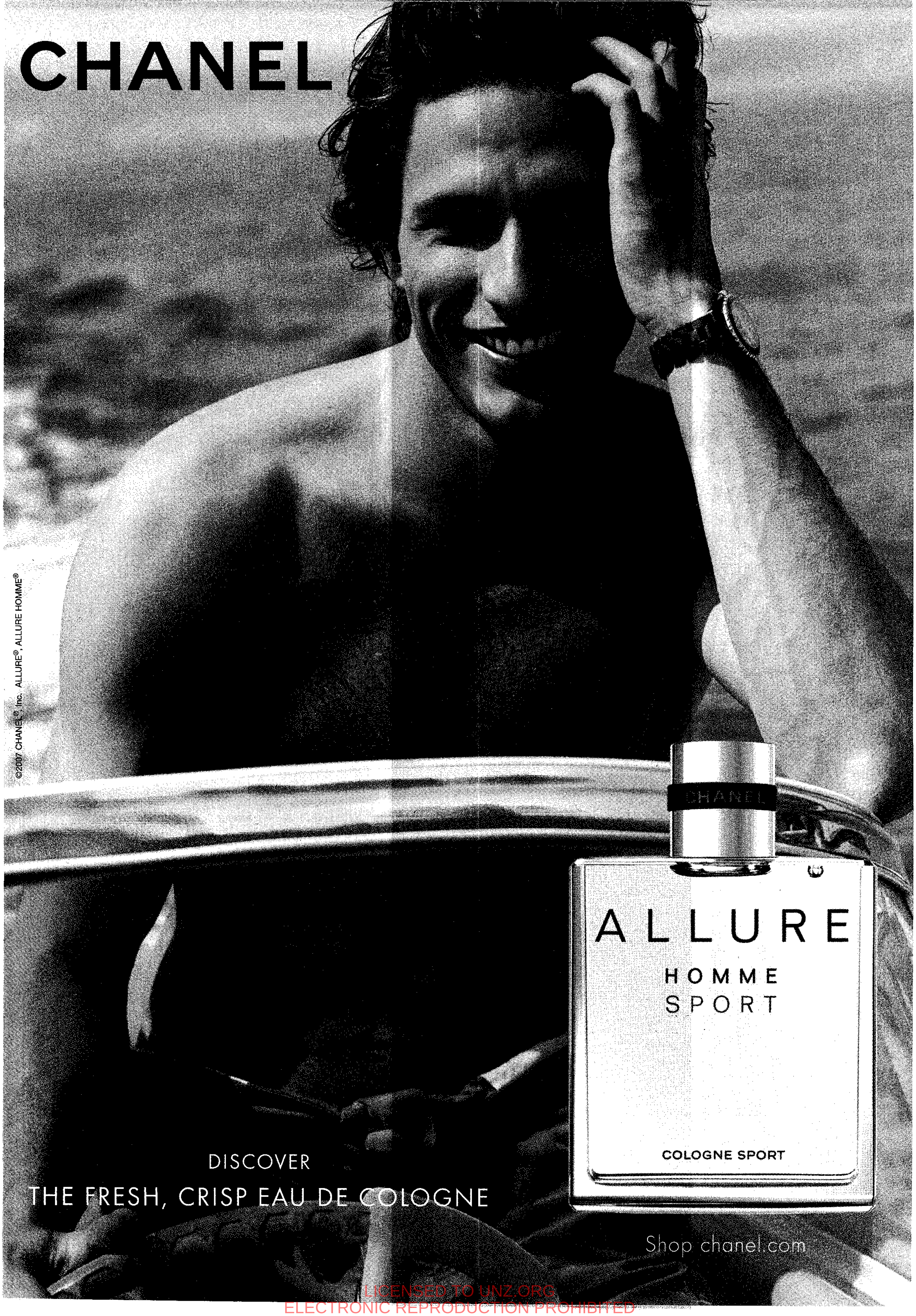
SPOTS *Lionel Koechlin*



"That's a start."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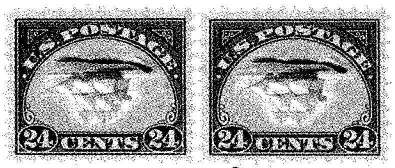

A rare pair of inverted Gummies, circa 1919. In mint condition, the black plate of the ships was mistakenly printed upside down. It's hard to assign a precise price to such philatelically-prized inadvertent inverts, particularly since these two are not genuine. But, if they were, collectors would agree, $45,000 IS A STEAL.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Ryan Lizza ("The Relaunch," p. 72) is the Washington correspondent for the magazine.

George Packer (Comment, p. 63) is the author of "The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq," for which he won a Helen Bernstein Book Award for Excellence in Journalism.

Gahan Wilson (Portfolio, p. 146) contributes regularly to the magazine. He will publish a collection of fifty years of his work for *Playboy* next year.

Calvin Tomkins (The Talk of the Town, p. 68) writes about art and cultural affairs for the magazine. His books include "Duchamp: A Biography."

Nora Ephron (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 86) is a writer and film director. Her book "I Feel Bad About My Neck" will be out in paperback in the spring.

Adam Zagajewski (Poem, p. 100), a Polish poet, novelist, and essayist, has a new poetry collection, "Eternal Enemies," coming out in April.

Alec Wilkinson ("The Patron," p. 88) is a longtime writer for the magazine. His most recent book, "The Happiest Man in the World," was published in March.

Peter Hessler ("Wheels of Fortune," p. 104) is working on "Country Driving," a book about driving in China.

Roberto Bolaño (Fiction, p. 116), a Chilean novelist and poet, died in 2003. A translation of his novel "The Savage Detectives" was published earlier this year.

James Wood (A Critic at Large, p. 158), a staff writer, is Professor of the Practice of Literary Criticism at Harvard. His new book, "How Fiction Works," is coming out in the spring.

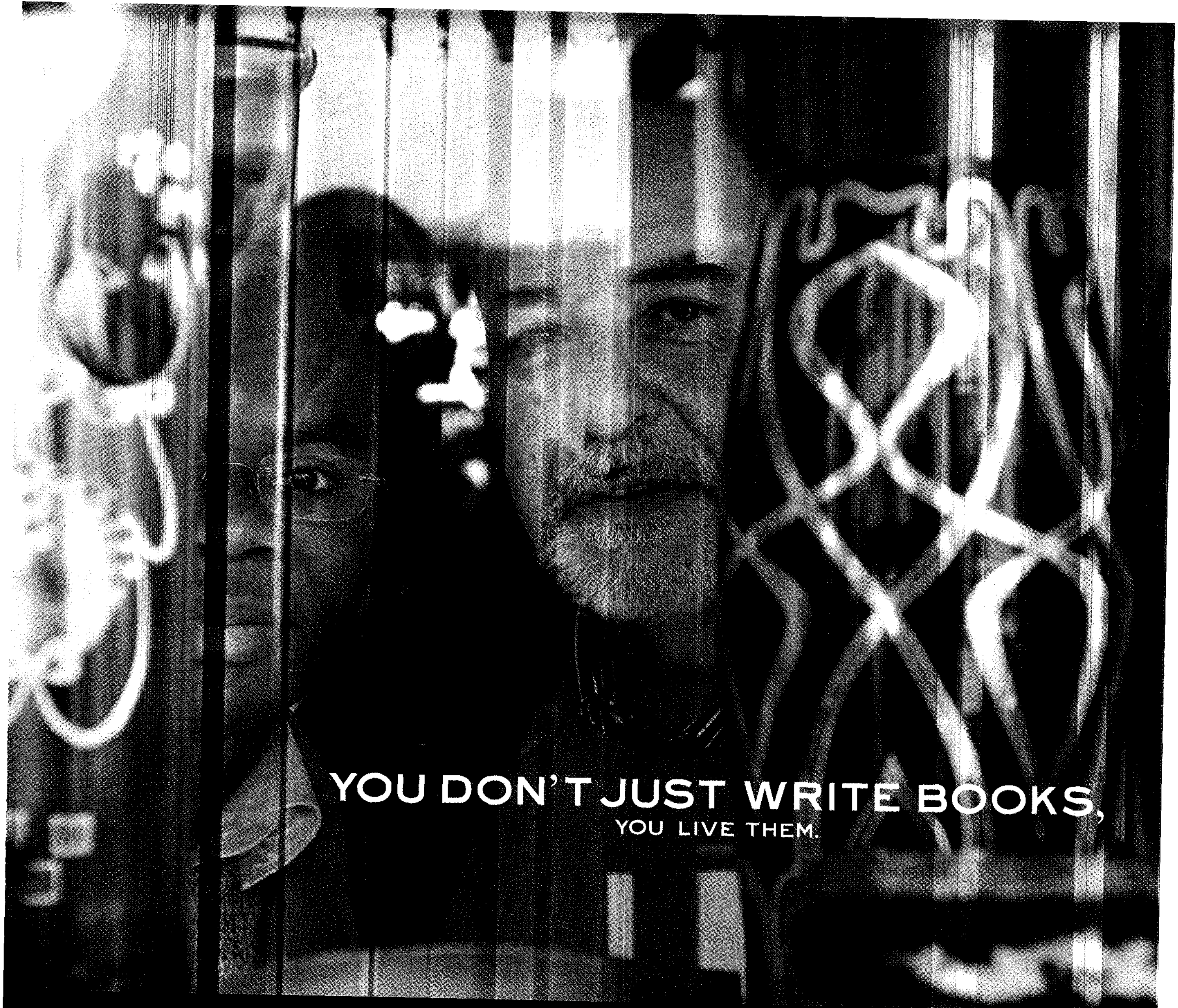
Gary Giddins (Jazz, p. 168) will be teaching at the CUNY Graduate Center in the spring. A collection of essays, "Natural Selection: Gary Giddins on Comedy, Film, Music, and Books," is due out in paperback next year.

Aline & R. Crumb (Comic Strip, p. 154) have been working together for thirty-five years. Aline Crumb is the author of "Need More Love," published earlier this year.

Chris Ware (Comic Strip, p. 145) is a cartoonist and graphic novelist. The eighteenth issue of his periodical *The ACME Novelty Library* will be published next month.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

Ryan Lizza talks with *Dorothy Wickenden* on The Campaign Trail, a new weekly podcast. / The New Yorker Out Loud: *Gahan Wilson* discusses his life and work with *Robert Mankoff.* / *George Packer's* Interesting Times, plus blogs by *Hendrik Hertzberg, Dana Goodyear,* and *Sasha Frere-Jones.* / From the archives: *Larisssa MacFarquhar* on Barack Obama, *David Remnick* on translating Tolstoy, and complete coverage of the 2008 Presidential race. / Thousands of movie reviews in the Film File. / Animated cartoons, the caption contest, and a list of *New Yorker* events around the country.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ANANI DODJI SANOUVI

FILM
STEPHEN FREARS
JOSUÉ MÉNDEZ

LITERATURE
TAHAR BEN JELLOUN
EDEM AWUMEY

MUSIC
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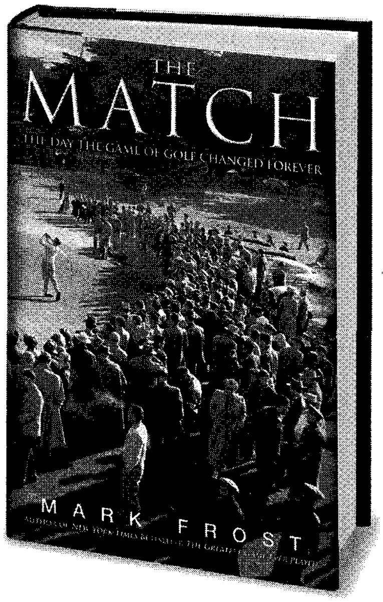

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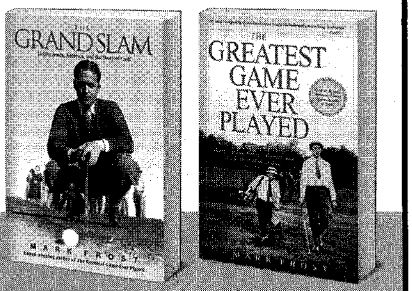

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BALANCING PROSPERITY

The contrast between Charles Sellers's "The Market Revolution" and Daniel Walker Howe's "What Hath God Wrought," which are reviewed by Jill Lepore, in interpreting nineteenth-century American history is uncannily like today's debates about globalization (Books, October 29th). In essence, the controversy is whether the expansion of markets and growing material prosperity is good for people—as producers and consumers on the one hand, and as ethical and moral beings, or citizens, on the other. Enlightenment thinking fused the two roles, but their coexistence has always been uneasy at the very least, if not contradictory, defining the boundary between classical "liberal" interpretations and radical, critical interpretations (including Marxism). The basic fact is that without market revolutions, whether national or global, individual ethical behavior will either be suppressed by religious empires or be limited to isolated Waldens. The challenge is to promote the material prosperity that market revolutions bring while tempering it with a concern for the public interest and good governance. Synthesizing history—whether American or that of the rest of the world—can alert us to the task, but its magnitude is geometrically greater today.

Philip G. Cerny
Professor of Global Affairs
Rutgers University
Newark, N.J.

POSITIVE THINKING

Ryan Lizza, in his examination of Mitt Romney and his campaign for the Presidency, mentions "Think and Grow Rich," the best-selling 1937 book that Mitt Romney absorbed as a young Mormon missionary ("The Mission," October 29th). The book was not simply a success manual or a self-help book, however; it was rooted in nineteenth-century pseudo-science and spirituality movements, especially New Thought, which preached that "thoughts are things," quite literally. When Napoleon Hill advised his readers to "think and grow rich," he was not speaking metaphorically. "Desire can be transmuted into gold," he wrote, through a weird process involving the "magnetic" forces of thought. This is not positive thinking; it's magical thinking. Romney's attraction to Hill's claptrap suggests that his intelligence is coupled with what many salesmen share: gullibility, a susceptibility to other people's pitches as well as confidence in their own.

Wendy Kaminer
Boston, Mass.

ARTISTIC AUTHENTICITY

Ben McGrath, in his piece on "rediscovered" Jackson Pollock paintings, mentions the use of fractal analysis in determining their authenticity (The Talk of the Town, October 22nd). In an article that appeared in *Nature*, my collaborator, Harsh Mathur, and I demonstrated that fractal analysis provides no information about whether a painting is an authentic Pollock. Among the arguments in our critique, the most direct is a drawing that I hastily scribbled in Adobe Photoshop; we dubbed it "Untitled 5." "Untitled 5" is a landscape of approximately twenty hand-drawn five-pointed stars that any child would be capable of rendering. Yet, according to fractal analysis, "Untitled 5" is an authentic Pollock. This indicates not a lack of complexity in Pollock's work but, rather, the ineffectiveness of fractal analysis in recognizing his hand. We have also analyzed authentic Pollocks and drip paintings by local artists. According to the fractal analysis, the known Pollocks were inauthentic, and paintings done earlier this year by local artists appear to be done by Pollock between 1948 and 1950.

Katherine Jones-Smith
Cleveland Heights, Ohio

•

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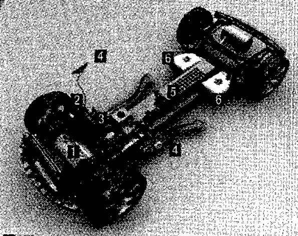

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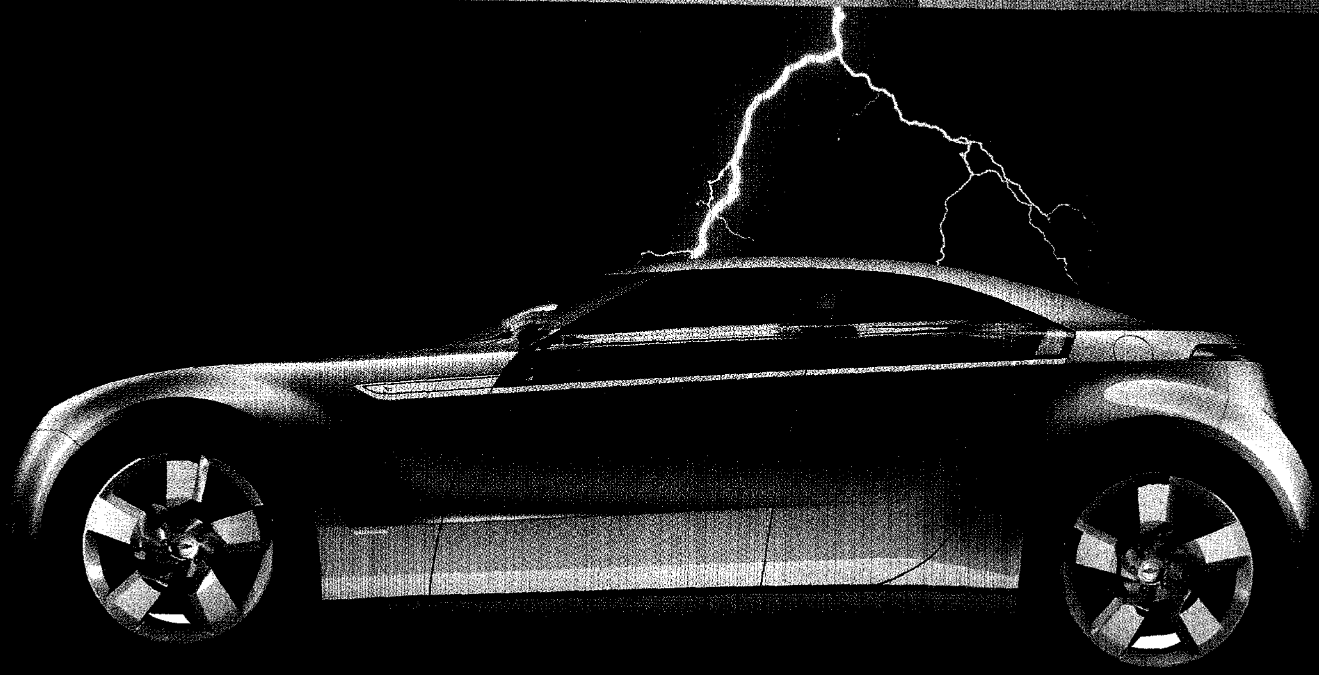

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
25	26	27	21	22	23	24

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
FEMME FATALE

The renaissance of the German playwright Frank Wedekind ("Spring Awakening") continues at BAM. Hamburg's Thalia Theatre brings Wedekind's tragic turn-of-the-century play "Lulu," a portrait of a young woman whose rise in the dance halls of Paris ends in depravity and prostitution. (See page 28.)

NIGHT LIFE
GIVING AND GIVING

The Great African Ball sets a remarkably high standard for celebration. Organized by the Senegalese singer Youssou N'Dour and based on the non-stop nocturnal dances popular in Dakar, it's a rhythmic marathon. N'Dour will be performing two nights in a row at the Nokia Theatre. (See page 36.)

ART
ISLAND TREASURES

The Metropolitan Museum has opened three new galleries for its renowned collection of Oceanic art. More than four hundred and twenty-five objects are on display, from rare Micronesian "weather charms" and Sumatran funereal puppets to a sprawling two-hundred-and-seventy-panel ceiling made for a Kwoma ceremonial house in New Guinea, installed in its entirety for the first time in the Melanesian Gallery. (See page 37.)

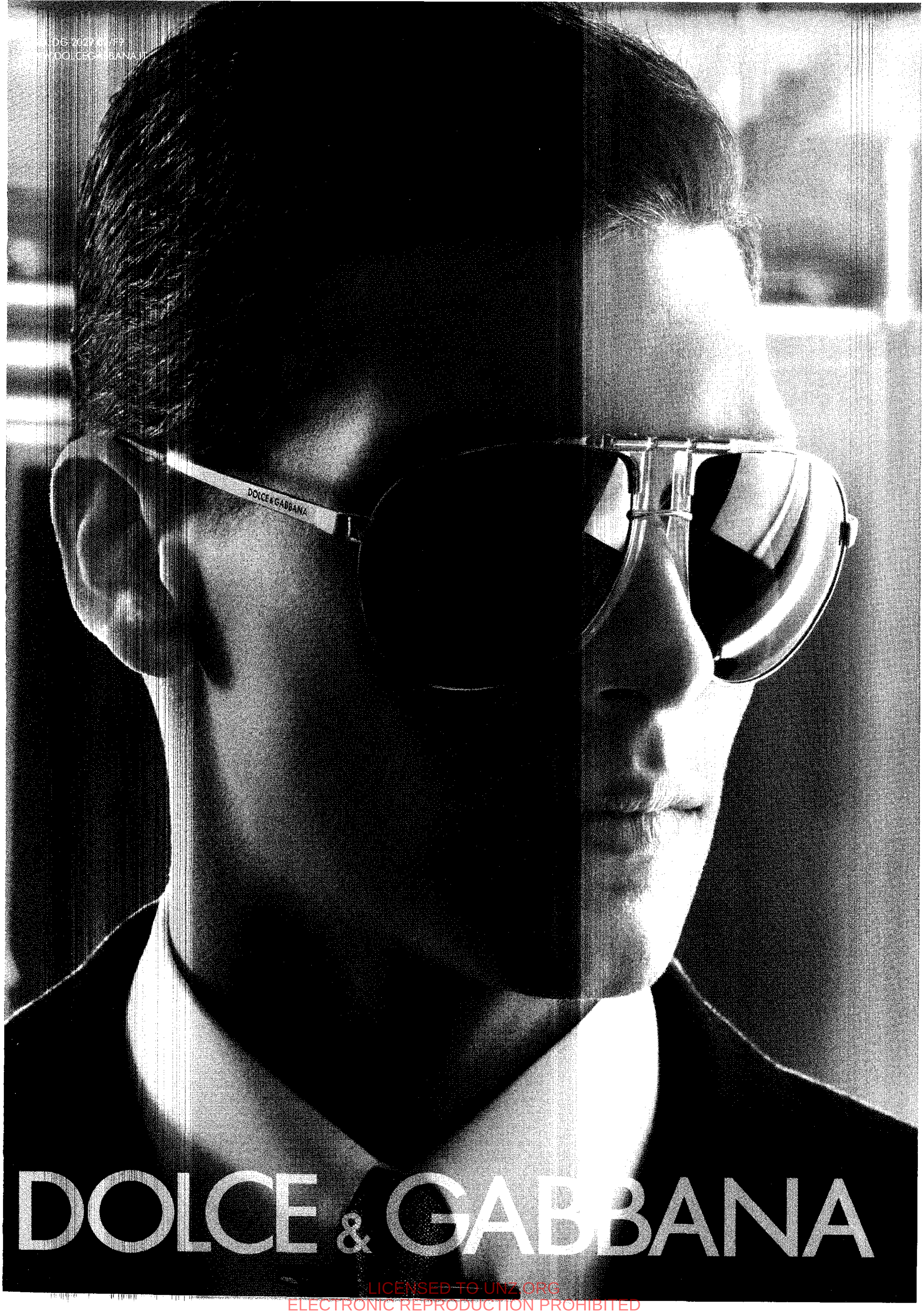
DANCE
CHA-CHA-CHA

Ballet Hispanico brings Willie Rosario's "Palladium Nights" to the Joyce Theatre. The evening-length piece, which depicts the famous jazz club in the nineteen-fifties, is accompanied by the live music of Arturo O'Farrill's Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra. (See page 45.)

MOVIES
THINK OF ENGLAND

Humphrey Jennings's Second World War documentaries are exemplary blends of humanism and advocacy. Anthology Film Archives offers a weekend of his films, including "Listen to Britain," an impressionistic portrait of a nation at war, "A Diary for Timothy," using the story of of a baby's first year (written by E. M. Forster) to depict the state of the nation, along with a biographical portrait of Jennings. (See page 51.)

"Jump," now at Union Square Theatre. Photograph by Brian Finke.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HOLIDAY EVENTS

"RADIO CITY CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR"

The show has come a long way since it was just an intermission feature offered between movie screenings at Radio City Music Hall. The leggy Rockettes are still there, as is the Nativity scene (complete with donkeys, camels, sheep, Wise Men, and mellifluous voice-over), but in the seventy-five years since its inception the show has acquired plenty of snazzy numbers and lots of high-tech razzle-dazzle, with new features introduced every year. For this anniversary season, the producers have added a retrospective film, 3-D fireworks, and two new dance numbers for the Rockettes, including the finale, "Let Christmas Shine," in which their costumes are dripping with Swarovski crystals. (Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 212-307-1000. Through Dec. 30.)

"THE NUTCRACKER"

New York City Ballet kicks off its month-long run of Balanchine's classic "Nutcracker." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. Nov. 23-Dec. 30.) ♦ Dances Patrelle's "Yorkville Nutcracker" goes local, in a clever staging that translates the story from nineteenth-century Germany to turn-of-the-twentieth-century New York. Little Mary Strong is the mayor's daughter, and the Christmas party is held at Gracie Mansion. The Sugarplum Fairy and her Cavalier are Abi Stafford and Stephen Hanna, both of New York City Ballet. (Kaye Playhouse, Park Ave. at 68th St. 212-772-4448. Dec. 6-9.) ♦ The pre-professional students of the Joffrey Ballet School, ages five to twenty-one, have their chance to shine in the school's yearly "Nutcracker," an elegantly traditional production that features a guest performance by George de la Peña (a former principal at American Ballet Theatre) as Dr. Drosselmeyer. (Skirball Center, 566 LaGuardia Pl. 212-279-4200. Dec. 14-16.) ♦ Valentina Kozlova presents students from her Dance Conservatory Academy in a "Nutcracker" that features an eccentric Auntie Drosselmeyer (Margot Sappington), who performs magic tricks. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Dec. 15.) ♦ Short and sweet, the New York Theatre Ballet's version lasts an hour, features adorable children in the roles of mice, angels, and the Russian acrobat, and has sets inspired by the nineteenth-century English lithographs known as "toy theatres." (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-355-6160. Dec. 15-30.)

TREES

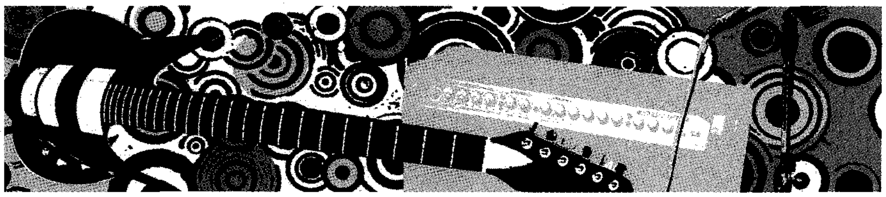
A folded-paper menagerie festoons the American Museum of Natural History's origami tree, on display in the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Hall, pairing the mythic (unicorns, dragons) and the real (peacocks, narwhals). Through Jan. 1. (Central Park W. at 79th St. 212-769-5100.) ♦ The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Christmas tree is decked out in eighteenth-century angels and cherubim, with a baroque Neapolitan crèche at its base. A daily tree-lighting ceremony is held Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays at 4:30 and hourly on Fridays and Saturdays from 4:30 to 6:30, as well as on Monday, Dec. 24 and Dec. 31 at 4:30. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-535-7710. Through Jan. 6.) ♦ Nov. 26 at 5:30: The hardworking and talented denizens of Lincoln Center's many productions, including dancers from "The Nutcracker" and singers from the opera "Hansel and Gretel," step outside and join the folksinger Dar Williams, the Hot 8 Brass Band, and other entertainers at a tree-lighting ceremony on Fountain Plaza. (212-875-5456.) ♦ For the past seventy-five years, a commanding conifer has sprung up in Rockefeller Center: this year, it is an eighty-four-foot-tall Norway spruce from Shelton, Connecticut. It will be set aglow on Nov. 28 at 7. (Fifth Ave. at 50th St. Through Jan. 7.)

HANUKKAH

The Festival of Lights begins this year on Dec. 4. That afternoon, at 5:30, the first lamp will be lit atop the thirty-two-foot-tall menorah at Fifth Ave. at 59th St. Lights will be added each night at the same time, except for Friday and Saturday, when the lighting takes place at 3:45 and 8:30, respectively. There will be live music, dancing, and hot latkes on the evening of the 9th. (For more information, call 718-778-6000.) ♦ Dec. 4: The Hasidic reggae performer Matisyahu has lined up a number of worthy friends to help him celebrate. On Dec. 4, he's joined by the guitarist Tim Reynolds and the harmonica-driven jam band Blues Traveler at Roseland. (239 W. 52nd St. 212-307-7171.) The following night, the Wailers and the Dub Trio are onstage with him. On Dec. 6, he journeys across the East River to Warsaw, where he'll be joined by the soul singer Ryan Shaw and the singer-songwriter Trevor Hall. On Dec. 8, his guests there are Zox and Joseph Israel. (261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn. 212-307-7171.) ♦ Dec. 8: The Israeli hip-hop act Hadag Nachash headlines a show at Webster Hall that's part of "The Eight," an international Hanukkah concert à la Live Earth that's taking place around the globe. (www.goeight.com.)

"HOLIDAY TRAIN SHOW"

The New York Botanical Garden's annual whimsical tribute to the romance of the season and the rails features model engines and cars chugging their way around the conservatory past replicas of more than a hundred and forty New York City landmarks, all constructed from twigs, berries, leaves, seeds, and the like. Miniature replicas of Ellis Island and the George Washington Bridge are new this year, as are evening celebrations complete with carolling and seasonal treats on Nov. 23-24, Saturdays in Dec., and Dec. 26-31. (Nov. 23-Jan. 13.



TOP CD BOXED SETS OF 2007

"The Brit Box: UK Indie, Shoegaze, and Brit-Pop Gems of the Last Millennium" (Rhino)—The first British Invasion, in the sixties, rewrote the rules of American popular culture. The second, punk, altered body-art taboos. The third, in the nineties, changed little more than the record-buying habits of college students. In case you missed that era, this swell set—packaged smartly in a foot-tall replica of an iconic British telephone booth—aptly surveys singles by Echo & the Bunnymen, the Smiths, Blur, and many others.

"The Complete Motown Singles Vol. 8: 1968" (Hip-O Select)—Late in 1967, Holland-Dozier-Holland, one of Motown's most reliable hit-making teams, parted ways with the label, and not on good terms. At the same time, Motown's executives moved into a new Detroit office, away from its writers and producers, and the label's founder, Berry Gordy, moved to Los Angeles. What's amazing is that the label persisted at all, let alone that it released material of the high quality documented on this set. The epochal hits of the year included the Temptations' "Cloud Nine" and Marvin Gaye's "I Heard It Through the Grapevine" (a vinyl 45 of the latter comes with the set), but there were also high-water marks from the Isley Brothers ("Behind a Painted Smile") and the Supremes ("Love Child"), not to mention dozens of obscurities, alternates, and one-offs.

Emmylou Harris, "Songbird: Rare Tracks and Forgotten Gems" (Rhino)—Harris started as a folkie, went on to record with Gram Parsons, sing with Bob Dylan, and set the standard for country vocalists. In three decades of work, she's produced popular hits and garnered critical acclaim; this four-CD, one-DVD set shines a light on the more obscure corners of her career. From its opening track, an outtake of the folk song "Clocks," to previously uncollected collaborations with the bluegrass multi-instrumentalist Carl Jackson and a host of other country musicians, it is a testament to the enduring power of her voice.

"The Heavy Metal Box" (Rhino)—In the seventies, heavy-metal performers made a deal with the Devil and prospered. This set doesn't stint on entertainment value, with hits by Iron Butterfly, Kiss, the Scorpions, and other monsters of rock. There's academic literature, of a sort—the guitarist Ronnie James Dio contributes an interview on the origins of the "horned hand" salute (according to him, it's a traditional Italian way of warding off evil)—and the whole thing comes in a box with a Spinal Tap-ish volume dial. It goes to eleven.

Roy Haynes, "A Life in Time" (Dreyfus)—The drummer Haynes may be the Zelig of jazz. How else would you describe an indispensable stylist who pops up on decades' worth of recordings by instrumentalists and vocalists as diverse as Lester Young, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Sarah Vaughan, Eric Dolphy, Stan Getz, and Chick Corea? This three-CD, one-DVD overview gives us a taste of Haynes's mastery and sets us up for more.

Robyn Hitchcock, "I Wanna Go Backwards" (Yep Roc)—As surrealistic folkies go, Robyn Hitchcock is an important link in a chain that connects acid casualties like Syd Barrett to modern troubadours like Devendra Banhart. This set collects three early solo records and adds two disks of B-sides, outtakes, and rarities. Though the quality of the recordings varies wildly, the quality of the songwriting is remarkably consistent.

"Love Is the Song We Sing: San Francisco Nuggets 1965-1970" (Rhino)—You would be forgiven for thinking that Rhino's Nuggets series had exhausted every last note of garage rock and psychedelia; this four-disk set offers a happy argument to the contrary. Opening with "Let's Get Together," by the scenester, folkie, and druggie Dino Valenti, it surveys five years of hazy, fuzzy, sometimes strident, frequently beautiful left-coast rock and roll. Even a scan of the bands is mood-altering: you'll find not only big names like Sly & the Family Stone and Santana but also more obscure bands like the Vejtables, the Tikis, the Stained Glass, and the Chocolate Watchband. The disks are housed in a coffee-table book that documents this strange land.

"People Take Warning! Murder Ballads & Disaster Songs, 1913-1938" (Tomkins Square)—This handsome book has plenty of archival photos and three disks' worth of songs about train crashes, homicides, natural disasters, and other tragedies. Produced in part by the musical scholar Henry (Hank) Sapoznik, it includes an introduction by Tom Waits, and its historical accuracy extends to preserving each nick and scratch of the source disks.

"Vee-Jay: The Definitive Collection" (Shout! Factory)—Before Motown, there was Vee-Jay, which was formed in the early fifties in Gary, Indiana, by Vivian Carter and James Bracken, set up shop in Chicago soon after, and began to release soul, blues, R. & B., and gospel hits. This set reviews the label's track record, touching down on early finds like Jimmy Reed ("Ain't That Lovin' You Baby"), mid-period stars like Gene Chandler ("Duke of Earl"), and more obscure artists like the Dukays, Gloria Jones, and Pee Wee Crayton. What's often forgotten, of course, is that Vee-Jay also introduced the Beatles to America, releasing "Please Please Me" and "From Me to You" before Capitol records ever did. Those two songs, sadly, aren't included, but what is here is almost as impressive.

JOHN RITTER

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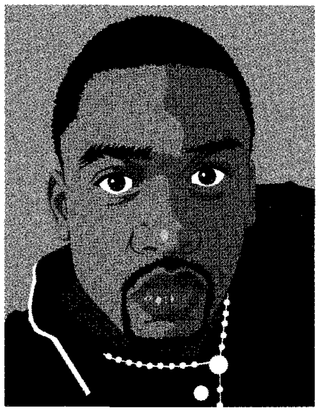
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
GRIME DOESN'T PAY

A few years ago, American music nerds like me got excited about an emerging British genre called grime, which was supposed to be England's answer to hip-hop. Grime is a dark, spare, synthetic music whose rhythmic tendencies are different from those of American hip-hop's slightly softer bounce, and whose rapping is full of regional British accents and slang most Yanks can't decode without Google. But grime never caught on here commercially. It's a shame, since the music is thriving in England; both grime and an instrumental offshoot called dubstep have been having a strong year. Grime's best-known m.c., Dizzee Rascal, put out a lean and unsentimental album called "Maths + English," and his onetime mentor Wiley released his best album to date, "Playtime Is Over." The fantastically cold sounds of "Playtime" live up to Wiley's nickname, Eski Boy. Wiley is no longer converting American audiences; when he appears on Nov. 23 at the Knitting Factory, he'll simply be keeping the faithful up to date.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*



QUICKHONEY

Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, closed Christmas, and closing at 3 on Dec. 7 and Dec. 24. Bronx River Parkway at Fordham Rd., the Bronx. 718-817-8700.)

"CHRISTMAS REVELS"
The annual winter-solstice celebration is a big Nordic party this year. The eighty-member cast of singers, dancers, and musicians serves up epic stories from the "Kalevala," Norwegian squat kicks, whirling Swedish *polskas*, and more. As always, the audience is encouraged to sing along and dance in the aisles. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Dec. 7-9.)

"A CHRISTMAS CAROL"
The Dickens classic is adapted and directed by Stephen Wargo, with musical arrangements by Dianne Adams McDowell. (TBG Arts Center, 312 W. 36th St. 212-868-4444. Dec. 7-22.)

"SEVEN IN ONE BLOW, OR THE BRAVE LITTLE KID"
Axis Theatre presents this annual show, adapted from the Brothers Grimm fairy tale, about a child who kills seven flies with one swat. (1 Sheridan Square, 212-352-3101. Dec. 7-22.)

"FOR THE TIME BEING: A CHRISTMAS ORATORIO"
The Affinity Company Theatre and the Poetry Society of America present staged readings of W. H. Auden's elaborate poem, which he wrote during the Second World War. The cast includes Maria Tucci, and the production is directed by Michael Cumpsty. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 212-352-3101. Dec. 9 at 7:30. Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Dec. 10 at 7:30. The church of St. Luke In-the-Fields, 487 Hudson St. 212-414-9419. Dec. 16 at 8.)

"KIKI AND HERB: THE SECOND COMING—A CHRISTMAS CONCERT"
The battered old broad Kiki (Justin Bond) and her indefatigable accompanist, Herb (Kenny Mellman), spread some holiday cheer in a special appearance at Carnegie Hall. (154 W. 57th St. 212-247-7800. Dec. 12.)

WINTER SOLSTICE
Paul Winter brings his Consort back to the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. As was the case with last year's celebration, the action will take place not in the nave, which is closed for restoration, but in the Crossing and Great Choir, under the Cathedral's hundred-and-fifty-foot dome. The ascending-sun gong and the earth ball will be there, as will the Brazilian singer and guitarist Renato Braz, the Native American multi-instrumentalist John-Carlos Perea, and other performers. (Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 866-468-7619. Dec. 13-15.)

"TAPPY HOLIDAYS"
The idea is obvious: holiday songs performed by a jazz trio and whiz-kid tap dancers. But it was only last year that the event had its début, which was charming and stylish enough to make tap lovers embrace a new tradition. Performers include several youth ensembles, along with pros like Jared Grimes and Mable Lee. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Dec. 14 at 8.)

"HOLIDAY WONDERS"
The variety pageant presented by the New York-based New Tang Dynasty TV corporation is a compelling, bizarre East-West mix. A prettified, folkloric rendering of a Mongolian bowl dance or a polemical fable about the persecution of the Falun Gong sect might follow an excerpt from "The Nutcracker," an erhu tune, or a Chinese fan dance on a Christmas theme. (Beacon, Broadway at 74th St. 212-307-4111. Dec. 18-26.)

"500 CLOWN CHRISTMAS"
The improv and action-based company 500 Clown joins forces with the composer-musician John Fournier for a holiday show, featuring three clowns and a three-piece band. (P.S. 122, at 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101. Dec. 21-30.)

"STRIKING 12"
GrooveLily reprises this indie-pop musical, about a misanthrope whose outlook is turned around by a charming salesgirl. (Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-352-3101. Dec. 27-31.)

HOLIDAY MUSIC—CLASSICAL

"MESSIAH"
The St. Thomas Choir, which plies its noble trade in the luxuriant Anglican splendor of its eponymous church on Fifth Avenue, has always set a certain local standard for the "Messiah" because of its direct connection to the finest traditions of English music-making. The group's musicianship and style remain impressive under the tutelage of John Scott, who leads it in two performances accompanied by the Baroque group Concert Royal. (Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. Dec. 11 and Dec. 13 at 7:30. For tickets, visit www.saintthomaschurch.org.) ♦ Handel's generous "entertainment" on Christian themes has many other champions in the city, including the Trinity Choir, which, conducted by Owen Burdick, joins forces with a formidable period band, Rebel, for two performances downtown. (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. 866-468-7619. Dec. 16 at 3 and Dec. 18 at 7:30.) ♦ Among the secular choruses presenting "Messiah" is Musica Sacra, led by the venerable Richard Westenburg, which offers a modern, symphonic rendering of the work that nonetheless has a light and smooth Baroque feel. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Dec. 19 and Dec. 21 at 8.)

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
The orchestra, for several years, has offered a worthy "Messiah" of its own. This year it will be led by an acclaimed expert in eighteenth-century style, Nicholas McGegan; the vocalists are the estimable Celena Shafer, Margaret Lattimore, John Mark Ainsley, and Nathan Berg, along with the New York Choral Artists. (Dec. 19-20 at 7:30, Dec. 21 at 2, and Dec. 22 at 8.) ♦ The Phil's impressive brass section—teaming up with the gentlemen of the Canadian Brass—begins the holiday season with an afternoon of festive music. (Dec. 9 at 3.) ♦ The violinist Joshua Bell will be the special guest of the orchestra's New Year's Eve gala, conducted by Lorin Maazel. (Dec. 31 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

CARNEGIE HALL
Nicole Cabell, a prominent, up-and-coming soprano, is the guest for Doc Severinsen's holiday concerts with the New York Pops, joining with the massed voices of the Fort Worth-T.C.U. Symphonic Choir. (Dec. 14-15 at 8.) ♦ The Christmas Eve concert by the New York String Orchestra, an annual convocation of young virtuosos led by Jaime Laredo, is all Mozart: the Symphony No. 1 in E-Flat Major, the Piano Concerto No. 22, in the same key (with Yefim Bronfman), and the Symphony No. 35, "Haffner." (Dec. 24 at 7.) ♦ Wind and brass instruments will abound in the group's surprisingly beefy second concert, which features not only an appearance by another piano eminence (André Watts, in Beethoven's Concerto No. 4 in G Major) but also the New York première of a work by Richard Danielpour and a performance of Dvořák's bighearted "New World" Symphony. (Dec. 28 at 8.) (212-247-7800.)

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
To hear a Christmas concert in the majestic intimacy of the museum's Medieval Sculpture Hall is an essential New York experience. Chanticleer, the ebullient (and stunningly expert) San Francisco men's chamber choir, has been drawing eager crowds for several years by offering a tempting mix of carols, spirituals, and sacred polyphony from the medieval and Renaissance periods. (Dec. 2 and Dec. 4-5 at 6:30 and 8:30.) ♦ In a slightly edgier evening of Christmas cheer, a fine quartet of cellists—Judith Serkin, Priscilla Lee, Theodore Mook, and Clancy Newman—and the mezzo-soprano Mary Nessinger (from the new-music group Sequitur) perform works by Bach, Falla, and Pärt, along with a selection of traditional carols. (Dec. 13 at 6:30 and 8:30.) (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949.)

BARGEMUSIC
The doughty chamber-music series on Brooklyn's Fulton Ferry Landing is a cozy winter nook that offers spectacular views of New York Harbor and wine and cheese at intermission. The pianist Steven

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Beck performs Bach's Goldberg Variations on Christmas Eve. (Dec. 24 at 8.) ♦ New Year's Eve is marked by the violinist Mark Peskanov, the barge's artistic director, who leads a band of New York's finest young musicians in that other Bach holiday favorite, the Brandenburg Concertos. (Dec. 31 at 7:30.) (718-624-2083.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
Perhaps the most alluring performances of the Brandenburgs can be found at the annual concerts given by New York's élite chamber musicians (including the violinists Ani Kavafian and Kyoko Takezawa, the cellist David Finckel, and the flutist Ransom Wilson), who this year move their venue to Jazz at Lincoln Center's Rose Theatre. (Broadway at 60th St. 212-875-5788. Dec. 16 at 5 and Dec. 18 at 7:30.)

MORE HOLIDAY MUSIC

"BLISTERING CHRISTMAS EXTRAVAGANZA"
The former Stray Cat Brian Setzer turns up the volume with his holiday show. He'll be backed by an eighteen-piece big band for a night of rockabilly and swing. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 212-307-7171. Nov. 21.)

"FUNK BUDDHA HIP-HOP HOLIDAY"
The Zimbabwean expat Akim Funk Buddha and friends kick off the season by singing, dancing, and rhyming their way across the cultural landscape. (BAM Café, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Nov. 23-24.)

"RED HOT HOLIDAY STOMP"
Wynton Marsalis and members of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra bring a little New Orleans spice to the most wonderful time of the year. (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. Dec. 6-8.)

AIMEE MANN'S CHRISTMAS SHOW
Last year, the singer-songwriter released a Christmas album, "One More Drifter in the Snow," and held a touring variety show and concert that drew the likes of Fred Armisen, Nellie McKay, and Grant Lee Phillips to the stage. Expect similar guests at her New York show this season. (Grand Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 212-307-7171. Dec. 14.)

"Z100 JINGLE BALL"
Alicia Keys, Jonas Brothers, Avril Lavigne, and other pop-music luminaries turn out for a night of Yuletide cheer. (Madison Square Garden. 212-307-7171. Dec. 14.)

"NORTON RECORDS HOLIDAY SPECTACULAR"
In a not so silent night, the raw sounds of garage rock, punk, and R. & B. ring out at Southpaw. Performers include the Reigning Sound, the A-Bones, Luis & the Wildfires, the Nouvellas, Mary Weiss, the Great Gaylord, the Figures of Light, Roy Loney, the Mighty Hannibal, and Handsome Dick Manitoba. (125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn. 718-230-0236. Dec. 15.)

RONNIE SPECTOR'S XMAS PARTY
The rock legend holds her very own holiday spectacular. (B. B. King Blues Club & Grill, 237 W. 42nd St. 212-997-4144. Dec. 15-16.)

"A CHRISTMAS CELTIC SOJOURN"
For the past five years, the radio-show host Brian O'Donovan has organized a holiday concert in Boston that has proved popular with the locals. This Dec. 19-20, he brings the music and dancing to New York City. Seamus Egan's group Solas and the Scottish singer-songwriter Dougie MacLean lead the offerings. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-307-7171.)

"PUTTING THE HA! IN HANUKKAH"
Heeb magazine presents a night of music and comedy featuring Good for the Jews, a band put together by the journalist and musician Rob Tannenbaum, one of the creators of the revue "What I Like About Jew." Like that effort, this group—featuring David Fagin, the front man for the power-pop group the Rosenbergs—takes a humorous look at Tannenbaum's faith. The LeeVees and other musicians and comedians are expected. (Highline Ballroom, 431 W. 16th St. 212-414-5994. Dec. 23.)

"BENDING TOWARDS THE LIGHT"
The smoking percussionist Candido, the tenor saxophonist Bob Kindred, the vocalist Hilary Kole, the trombonist Benny Powell, the trumpeter Lew Soloff, and others perform a "jazz Nativity," which has been a New York tradition for more than twenty years. (Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. 212-581-3080. Dec. 23-25.)

Suzanne Vega plays the Manhattan Center's Grand Ballroom.

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

At press time, Local One, the Broadway stagehands' union, was on strike, and many Broadway theatres were dark. Please call the phone numbers listed with the theatres to verify that shows are running, and for timetables and ticket information.

THE CONSTANT COUPLE
At the Pearl, Jean Randich directs this 1699 comedy by George Farquhar, set in London, about a colonel trying to win over a popular lady. In previews. Opens Nov. 25. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

CYMBELINE
Michael Cerveris, Martha Plimpton, and Phylicia Rashad star in the Shakespeare romance. Mark Lamos directs. In previews. (Vivian Beaumont, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE DEVIL'S DISCIPLE
Irish Repertory Theatre presents George Bernard Shaw's 1897 melodrama, set during the Revolutionary War. Previews begin Nov. 27. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

DORIS TO DARLENE, A CAUTIONARY VALENTINE
Jordan Harrison's play interweaves stories from the eighteen-sixties, while Wagner is writing his "Liebestod," the nineteen-sixties, when a young woman becomes a pop star, and the present day. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE HOMECOMING
Raúl Esparza, Ian McShane, Eve Best, and Michael McKean star in Harold Pinter's Tony Award-winning play from 1967, about a dysfunctional North London family. Daniel Sullivan directs. Previews begin Nov. 23. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

IS HE DEAD?
Michael Blakemore directs this recently unearthed comedy by Mark Twain, about an artist who fakes his death in the hope of inciting a bidding frenzy for his work. Norbert Leo Butz stars. In previews. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE LITTLE MERMAID
Francesca Zambello directs an adaptation of the film, with a book by Doug Wright and music and lyrics by Alan Menken, Howard Ashman, and Glenn Slater. In previews. (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.)

LULU
Michael Thalheimer directs Frank Wedekind's play, performed by Hamburg's Thalia Theatre. In German with English supertitles. Opens Nov. 27. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100.)

OH, THE HUMANITY AND OTHER GOOD INTENTIONS
Marisa Tomei stars in the première of a new work by Will Eno, five short plays about everyday life. Jim Simpson directs. In previews. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

PUMPGIRL
The Irish playwright Abbie Spallen wrote this drama, set in rural Ireland, about a gas-station attendant, the race-car driver she is obsessed with, and his wife. Carolyn Cantor directs. In previews. (City Center, Stage II, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

QUEENS BOULEVARD (THE MUSICAL)
Signature Theatre Company presents the première of a musical by Charles Mee, in which a groom gets caught up in the city streets on his wedding day. In previews. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

TRUMPERY
A new play by Peter Parnell, set in 1858, in which Charles Darwin is developing his theory of natural selection at the same time that another explorer comes up with the same theory, thousands of miles away. David Esbjornson directs. In previews. (Atlantic Theatre Company, 336 W. 20th St. 212-279-4200.)

YELLOW FACE
Center Theatre Group co-produced this play by David Henry Hwang, inspired by his protest against the hiring of Jonathan Pryce for the original Broadway production of "Miss Saigon." Leigh Silverman directs. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

PETER HAPAK

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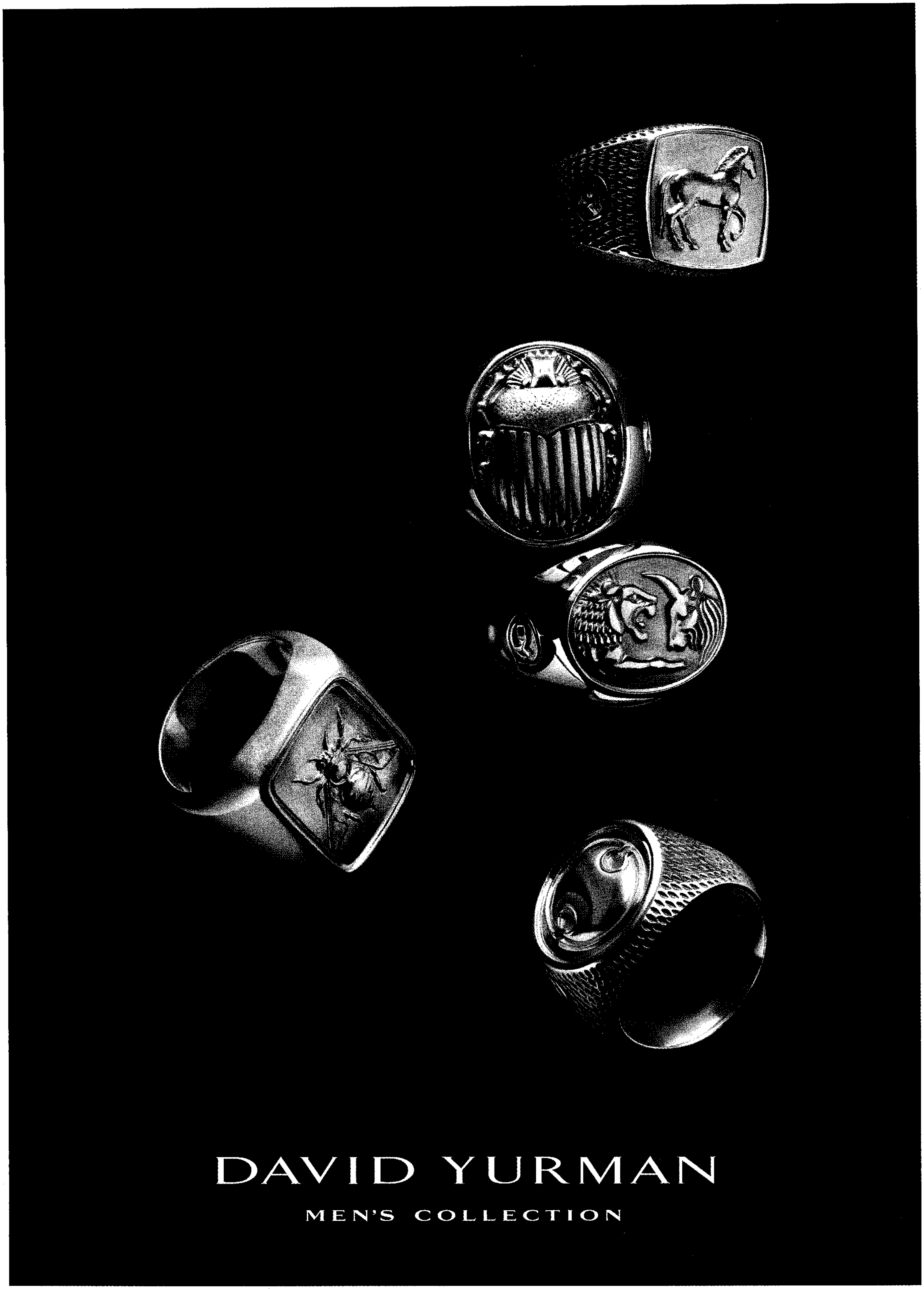

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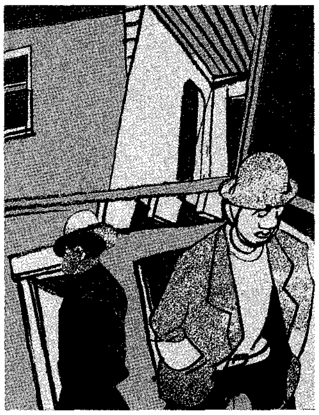
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
WE WAIT


RICCARDO VECCHIO

In New Orleans's Lower Ninth Ward one recent evening, the New York-based arts council Creative Time and the exemplary theatre troupe the Classical Theatre of Harlem were presenting Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot," from 1949. The brainchild of the multimedia artist Paul Chan, the production starred Wendell Pierce as Vladimir. (A New Orleans native, Pierce also appeared to moving effect in "When the Levees Broke," Spike Lee's documentary about the 2005 Katrina disaster.) Side by side, Vladimir and Estragon (the great up-and-comer J Kyle Manzay) stood in a field of dried weeds, as the air off the Mississippi River wafted through ruined trees and ruined houses in the night. Estragon's cries made the six hundred and fifty or so onlookers at this free event shiver with recognition. As directed by the ever-inventive Christopher McElroen, the "Godot" seen here became, after a while, a mirror to those New Orleans natives who may or may not have given up on Godot by now, as they wait for the return of their faith.

—Hilton Als

NOW PLAYING

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY
This Steppenwolf transfer by Tracy Letts ("Bug") is about the disappearance of an Oklahoma family man. (Imperial, 245 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

BAD JAZZ
The Play Company kicks off its season with Robert Farquhar's dark comedy, about the offstage antics of a theatre group led by a maniacal director. Trip Cullman directs. (Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 212-868-4444. Through Nov. 25.)

BINGO WITH THE INDIANS
Adam Rapp's brutal and unevenly funny bid at meta-theatre takes place in a cheap motel room in New Hampshire, where three members of a New York theatre company are planning a raid on a local bingo game. Self-serious to the point of absurdity, they talk about "rehearsals" as if they were plotting an assassination, and their "creative process" seems to consist of mind games, coke, and beatings. Rapp uses this overtly contrived scenario to take jabs at the downtown theatre scene. But, when one of the characters seduces (via acting drills) and then discards a local teen-ager, the play becomes something other than a satire—a metaphor, perhaps, for Rapp's need to communicate through theatre, even if his methods border on the sadomasochistic. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT
Marilyn Campbell and Curt Columbus's bold and brilliant adaptation of Dostoyevsky's novel pares the plot to its essentials, using a cast of three to play the key characters—Raskolnikov (Scott Parkinson), the destitute murderer/intellectual, Sonia (Susan Bennett), the prostitute he loves, and Porfiry Petrovich (John Judd), the canny detective who pursues him. The play begins after Raskolnikov's crimes have been committed, with important scenes presented in well-integrated flashbacks. The clean, spare structure, with a stark set to match, provides ample psychic space for the actors to give nuanced performances that do justice to Dostoyevsky's dialogue about ordinary and extraordinary men, the conscience, and compassion. Deftly directed by Michael Halberstam. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

CYRANO DE BERGERAC
A superb revival of the 1897 play by Edmond Rostand, translated and adapted by Anthony Burgess and directed by David Leveaux. As Cyrano, Kline is sensational, and Garner is every inch an object of desire. In this swashbuckling and subtle, breathtaking and heartbreaking production, you feel the selfishness, the naïveté, the manipulativeness, and the hurtfulness in Roxane's behavior, and, like Cyrano, you forgive her all of it. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/12/07.) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-239-6200.)

DAI (ENOUGH)
Iris Bahr's comic one-woman show, focussing on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, returns to New York. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

DR. SEUSS' HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS! THE MUSICAL
The classic holiday story, adapted for the stage, returns. Jack O'Brien directs. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE FARNSWORTH INVENTION
Hank Azaria and Jimmi Simpson star in a new play by Aaron Sorkin, about Philo Farnsworth, the boy genius who invented television, and David Sarnoff, the head of R.C.A., who challenged his patent ownership. Des McAnuff directs. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE 4TH GRADERS PRESENT AN UNNAMED LOVE-SUICIDE
The GoChicago! Festival concludes with Sean Graney's black comedy, about children performing a play left in a suicide note by a classmate. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE GLORIOUS ONES
This new musical, based on the Francine Prose novel, is the somewhat repetitive backstage and onstage story of commedia dell'arte. The musical, from the seasoned team of Lynn Ahrens (who wrote the book and lyrics) and Stephen Flaherty (who composed the music), celebrates the antic without itself being playful. Marc Kudisch and Natalie Venetia Belcon give especially good voice to the Italian comic stereotypes but can't lift the worthy enterprise out of the ordinary. Graciela Daniele directs. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

A HARD HEART
Amidst the huddled creatures of a city under siege, one stands erect: Riddler (Kathleen Chalfant), a cool-brained minister of war with square shoulders, glittering eyes, and a flinty voice charged with adrenaline. Like a spark in a canyon, Chalfant commands all attention in Will Pomerantz's serviceable revival of Howard Barker's grim 1991 play of ideas, overwhelming the dense language and sketchy symbolism in surges of pure, jittery ego. And, though Barker's subtler points about the theory and practice of war sometimes get lost amid the verbiage and the explosions, his main conception—that of the avid architect gleefully designing war machines—looms like an awesome, terrifying giant. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

HOODOO LOVE
Everyone's got the blues and no one can really sing in Katori Hall's chronicle of black life in nineteen-thirties Memphis: spirited, luckless young Toulou (Angela Lewis), who just arrived from the Mississippi Delta; her dissolute brother, a phony preacher; her meddlesome, spell-casting neighbor lady; and her shiftless lover, a bluesman known as the Ace of Spades. The plot is soapy, the music an afterthought, the structure meandering. Yet under Lucie Tiberghien's energetic direction Hall's flawed tale refuses to sink, buoyed by sheer youthful exuberance and bursts of genuine feeling. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 212-239-6200.)

THE JOY LUCK CLUB
Pan Asian Repertory presents Susan Kim's adaptation of Amy Tan's novel. (Julia Miles, 424 W. 55th St. 212-239-6200.)

MAKE ME A SONG: THE MUSIC OF WILLIAM FINN
William Finn, the composer-lyricist behind "Falsettos" and "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee," gets a musical revue spanning much of his career, from best-loved numbers to rarities. A cast of four performs the songs, along with an onstage piano player who, with his Steinway, is spun around when things get exuberant; wryly hanging above them is an imposing neon representation of Finn's head. The wit, tunefulness, and rugged humanity that made the "Falsettos" material beloved are in evidence here, as are plenty of crowd-pleasing jokes, about Republicans, genetics ("The bad trait / will always predominate"), Passover ("the feast of no yeast"), and so on. Conceived and directed by Rob Ruggiero. (New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

MISS WHITE HOUSE
Kaitlin Stillwell stars in this one-woman show by Ira Shapiro, about a female candidate running for President. Harland Meltzer directs. (45th Street Theatre, 354 W. 45th St. 212-279-4200.)

PETER AND JERRY
In this eloquent play, which combines Edward Albee's 1958 début one-act, "The Zoo Story," with a one-act prequel that he wrote in 2003, Albee extends his original provocative meditation on sexuality and solitude to include an examination of Peter's domestic desires. Peter (Bill Pullman) lives a smooth-surfaced life; in the course of a comradely heart-to-heart, his wife, Ann (Johanna Day), lets it be known that she hankers for violent, tumultuous sex. In Central Park, which is where the original "Zoo Story" begins, Peter encounters Jerry (Dallas Roberts), who embodies all the danger that Peter has banished from his life. Jerry, who wants to die, pro-

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vokes a fight, giving Peter a knife; for a split second in this violent encounter, Peter is excited. Jerry's gesture—and Albee's accomplishment—is to force Peter to face his own murderous feelings and the anarchy of desire. (11/19/07) (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

THE PIANO TEACHER
The Vineyard Theatre opens its season with the première of a new play by Julia Cho, about a retired music teacher. Kate Whoriskey directs. (108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

Liu Zheng's 1994 photograph, in the exhibition "Transfigurations," at Sepia.

RAG AND BONE
At the Rattlestick, Sam Gold directs Noah Haidle's new play, about the owners of a ladder store that fronts for a black-market-heart enterprise. (224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

REBEL VOICES
A rotating cast—including Wallace Shawn, Lili Taylor, and David Strathairn—reads this stage adaptation of Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove's book "Voices of a People's History of the United States." Rob Urbinati adapted and directs. (Culture Project, 55 Mercer St. 212-352-3101.)

RICHARD III
Michael Cumpsty returns to Classic Stage to star in and co-direct, with Brian Kulick, Shakespeare's chronicle of the plots, imprisonments, and murders that led Richard, Duke of Gloucester, to his brief reign as king. On a gleaming set featuring eight prominent chandeliers, Richard enters, pauses at the mirrored back wall, and gives the audience a coy wave before beginning his "Now is the winter of our discontent" speech; such notes of uncomfortable comic menace appear throughout. Cumpsty's Richard is clearly enjoying himself, and the well-directed cast—especially Roberta Maxwell, in an electrifying turn as the enraged Queen Margaret—does an excellent job of revealing the depth of depravity in the society that created him. (136 E. 13th St. 212-352-3101.)

ROCK 'N' ROLL
A synaptic jam session covering everything from Václav Havel to Pink Floyd, Tom Stoppard's latest work tracks the parallel lives of Max (Brian Cox), a staunchly Marxist Cambridge professor, and Jan (Rufus Sewell), his Czech protégé, whose career as a dissident is tethered to his love of rock—specifically, the underground band the Plastic People of the Universe. If the play (a London transfer, directed by Trevor Nunn) only occasionally matches the emotional heat of the music it samples, it nevertheless makes for a dazzling set of liner notes. (Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE RUNNER STUMBLES
The Actors Company Theatre presents a revival of a 1976 play by Milan Stitt, about a priest whose illicit love for a nun leads to an accusation of murder. Scott Alan Evans directs. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through Nov. 24.)

THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS
Max McLean stars in an adaptation of C. S. Lewis's novel, in which a demon in Hell explains the business of sin and temptation to his protégé in a series of letters. (Theatre at St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE SEAFARER
Conor McPherson's new play, set in Dublin on Christmas Eve, follows two aging brothers, one of whom is blind. The cast includes Ciarán Hinds, Conleth Hill, and David Morse. McPherson directs. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

SECRET ORDER
Marrimack Repertory presents a thriller by Bob Clyman, about a young scientist on the brink of finding a cure for cancer. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

SIVE
John B. Keene wrote this drama, set in nineteen-fifties Ireland, about a devious matchmaker who attempts to sell a young girl to an old man. (Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. Through Nov. 25.)

SPEECH & DEBATE
The Roundabout Underground's inaugural work, directed by Jason Moore, is an entertaining, at times hilarious play by the promising young playwright Stephen Karam. Though Karam's plot is a bit overstuffed, his dialogue and musical interludes are great fun, and Sarah Steele, as a frustrated singer and actress, is terrific. (111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN
Although there is plenty of electricity in the air at the new Broadway musical version of Mel Brooks's 1974 film, lightning doesn't strike twice. With its slack plot and its inflated production numbers, the show transforms a tale of romantic agony into a theatrical agony. Roger Bart, as Frederick, is noisy but unnuanced, lacking Wilder's crotchety vulnerability. Sutton Foster, as Inga, his Bavarian booty call, has a leggy charm but generates no real comic chemistry with her bellowing leading man. Only Andrea Martin, as Frau Blucher, the housekeeper and lover of the late Victor von Frankenstein ("He vas my boyfriend"), manages to stamp her droll personality and her sense of timing on the hectic proceedings. (11/19/07) (Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.)

Also Playing

AVENUE Q: Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **A BRONX TALE:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **THE BROTHERS SIZE:** Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. **A CHORUS LINE:** Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE COLOR PURPLE:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200. **CURTAINS:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DIE MOMMIE DIE!:** New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **THE DROWSY CHAPERONE:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100. **THE FANTASTICKS:** Snapple Theatre Center, 210 W. 50th St. 212-307-4100. **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: RUDE AWAKENING:** 47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **GONE MISSING:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **HAIRSPRAY:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **HAMLET:** Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **JUMP:** Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-307-4100. **LEGALLY BLONDE THE MUSICAL:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100. **THE LION KING:** Minskoff, 220 W. 45th St. 212-307-4747. **MAMMA MIA!:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-239-6200. **MARY POPPINS:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4747. **MASKED:** DR2, at 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **MAURITIUS:** Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. Through Nov. 25. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **MOSCOW CATS THEATRE:** Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 212-307-7171. **NONE OF THE ABOVE:** Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through Nov. 25. **THE OVERWHELMING:** Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. **PYGMALION:** American Airlines, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. **THE RECEPTIONIST:** City Center, Stage I, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. **THE RITZ:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **THINGS WE WANT:** Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. **THREE MO' TENORS:** Little Shubert, 422 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. **TINGS DEY HAPPEN:** Culture Project, 55 Mercer St. 212-352-3101. **THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE:** Circle in the Square, 50th St. between Broadway and Eighth Ave. 212-239-6200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100. **XANADU:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE

ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Nov. 23: **Commander Cody** and his band are still driving that hot-rod Lincoln. With **Terry Reid**, the English singer and guitarist who is affection-

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ately known as Super Lungs and who is most famous for turning down Jimmy Page's offer to join the band that became Led Zeppelin. Nov. 24: Great balls of fire! **Jerry Lee Lewis** continues to pound the piano with satanic glee. Later on Nov. 24: **Slick Rick.** The eye-patch-wearing rap veteran was born in England, but he made his name in the Bronx in the early eighties. His 1988 Def Jam début album, "The Great Adventures of Slick Rick," established his reputation as one of hip-hop's most influential and distinctive voices; his troublesome attitude toward women and his embrace of material goods may have been copied, but his accent and lyrical sense remain his own. After the release of his first album, he was convicted of attempted murder, for shooting his cousin. He spent five years in jail, and then, in 1999, delivered a comeback album, "The Art of Storytelling," featuring Outkast and Snoop Dogg. In 2002, he was almost deported by the I.N.S., which detained him during a post-9/11 crackdown on noncitizen felons. He spent almost a year and a half in detention before he was released. He remains in legal jeopardy, though, as the government continues to seek his deportation. Nov. 25: San Francisco's **Possessed** was a pioneering force in the shadowy realms of thrash and death metal in the eighties. Their progress was constantly scuttled by violent bad luck (or a curse, depending on what you choose to believe).

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—Nov. 21: The **Brian Setzer Orchestra.** The Stray Cats guitarist formed this group to embellish his neo-rockabilly material with elements of jazz and swing. Over the years, Setzer has pushed even farther afield, and he now interprets classical music, too. Here, his ensemble will tackle cherished Christmas songs for the holiday crowd.

BLENDER THEATRE AT GRAMERCY
127 E. 23rd St. (212-307-7171)—Nov. 27: The British duo **Soulsavers** makes electronic music that's more suited to melancholy contemplation than to limb-flailing hedonism. For their most recent album, "It's Not How Far You Fall, It's the Way You Land," the band recruited the lauded grunge veteran and former Screaming Trees front man Mark Lanegan, whose gritty, haunted performance steals the show.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Nov. 26: **Prefuse 73** (one of the many aliases used by the experimental hip-hop producer Guillermo Scott Herren) crafts wide-ranging electronic music. Nov. 27: The Norwegian singer **Sondre Lerche** is young—he released his major-label début, "Faces Down," in 2002, before he reached legal drinking age (at least in this country)—but he's already had a varied career. That record was full of sparkling pop confections. Last year's album, "The Duper Sessions," is a collection of acoustic jazz songs. His latest solo release, "Phantom Punch," moves toward the reckless rock usually associated with someone his age. Recently, he also composed and performed the soundtrack for the movie "Dan in Real Life."

CARNEGIE HALL
57th St. at Seventh Ave. (212-247-7800)—Nov. 24: **Arlo Guthrie** returns for his annual holiday show.

GRAND BALLROOM
Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. (212-307-7171)—Nov. 29: The singer-songwriter **Suzanne Vega** still has the distinctive voice that helped lodge her song "Luka" deep in the popular consciousness, twenty years ago. Since then, she's turned out a series of insightful albums; her latest, "Beauty & Crime," is a tribute to her home town, New York City.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Nov. 21: **¡Ya Está!,** an Afro-Cuban Latin-soul outfit headed by the composer, vocalist, and guitarist Bryan Vargas, makes smoking dance-party music. Their song "Guerreros Africanos" evokes both James Brown and Marc Ribot's Los Cubanos Postizos. The band includes three percussionists, a bassist,

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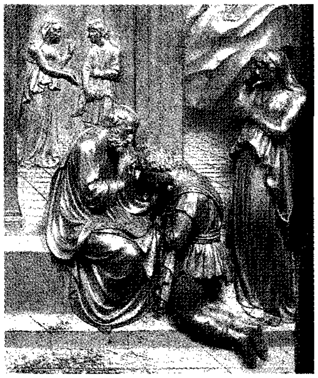
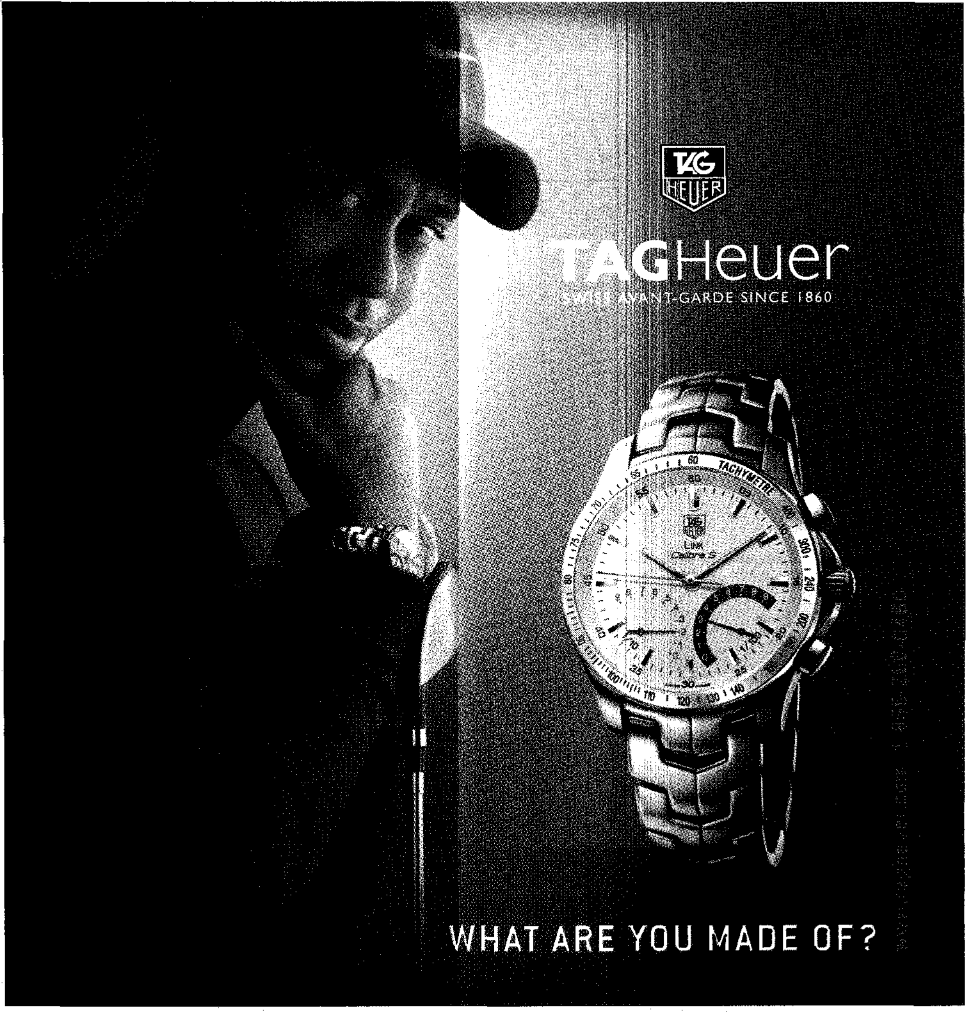
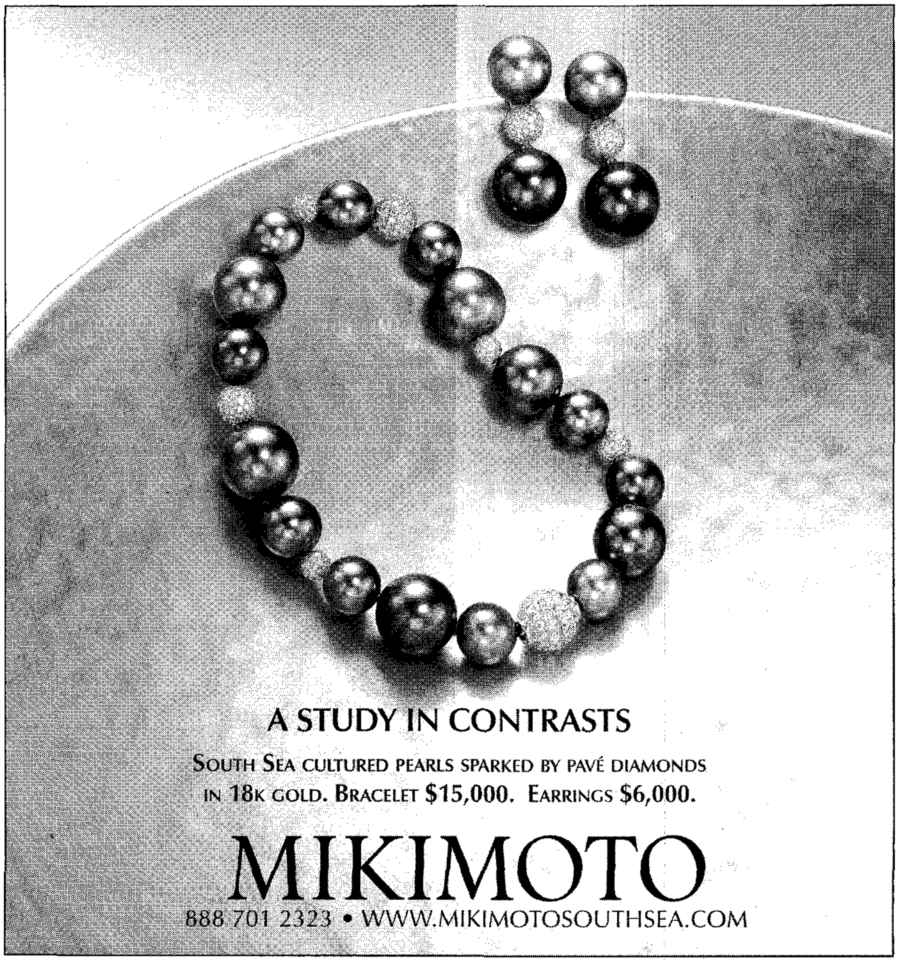
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
SOME OF ITS PARTS

There's a stilted air, as of a walk-in brochure larded with texts and photographs, to "The Gates of Paradise," the Met's show of newly restored panels from Lorenzo Ghiberti's immense gilded-bronze doors for the Baptistery in Florence, completed in 1452. Wizardly reliefs (three of the doors' ten) that tell Old Testament stories were made to glow in shade. Overlit, they become nerveless forensic specimens. Still, savor the early-Renaissance know-how. Ghiberti enriched the hybrid art of relief—pop-up painting, squashed sculpture—with advances in anatomy and perspective. (His geology and botany lagged; landscape passages stay charmingly medieval.) "David and Goliath" is an action movie. King Saul sends his army into churning combat—wielded weapons and struggling horses protrude—as, in the foreground, David beheads the giant. "Adam and Eve" is remarkable for a sublimely naked Eve, "Jacob and Esau" for spatial ingenuities. Lost, however, is the ensemble's multitudinousness; it will be restored when this tour of fragments ends.



—*Peter Schjeldahl*

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KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3132)—Nov. 23: The U.K. grime innovator **Wiley.**

LUNA LOUNGE
361 Metropolitan Ave., Brooklyn (718-384-7112)—Nov. 23: **Shonen Knife,** the prototypical cult band, is a feverishly beloved trio of Japanese women who play sugary, childlike pop and rudimentary punk rock. Their fans have included Kurt Cobain (a key supporter, who took them on tour with Nirvana). For more than twenty-five years, they've kept their act just shy of shtick.

NOKIA THEATRE TIMES SQUARE
Broadway at 44th St. (212-307-7171)—Nov. 21-22: The Great African Ball. When the Senegalese singer **Youssou N'Dour,** best known for his vocal work on Peter Gabriel's "In Your Eyes," performs in Dakar, it's often at a marathon dance party called a *soirée dansante*, in which he takes the stage at midnight and plays until the crowd stops moving and shaking, usually at dawn. Here, backed by his Super Étoile band, he presents a local version of the event, starting and ending a bit earlier, but still packing the same rhythmic punch. Nov. 23-24: The **Dark Star Orchestra** recreates Grateful Dead shows with a flashback-inducing meticulousness.

SYMPHONY SPACE
Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Nov. 24: **Hazmat Modine.** What do you get when you combine a pair of harmonicas, a tuba, some drums, a lap steel guitar, a trumpet, and the throat-singing group Huun-Huur-Tu? You get "Bahamut," the début album by this group, led by the singer and harmonica player Wade Schuman. They play blues originals mostly, which are the product of Schuman's limitless imagination. His voice, for that matter, appears to be bottomless. **Huun-Huur-Tu** is joining them here for this special show.

TERMINAL 5
610 W. 56th St. (212-260-4700)—Nov. 21: The hard-rocking locals in the **Hold Steady.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

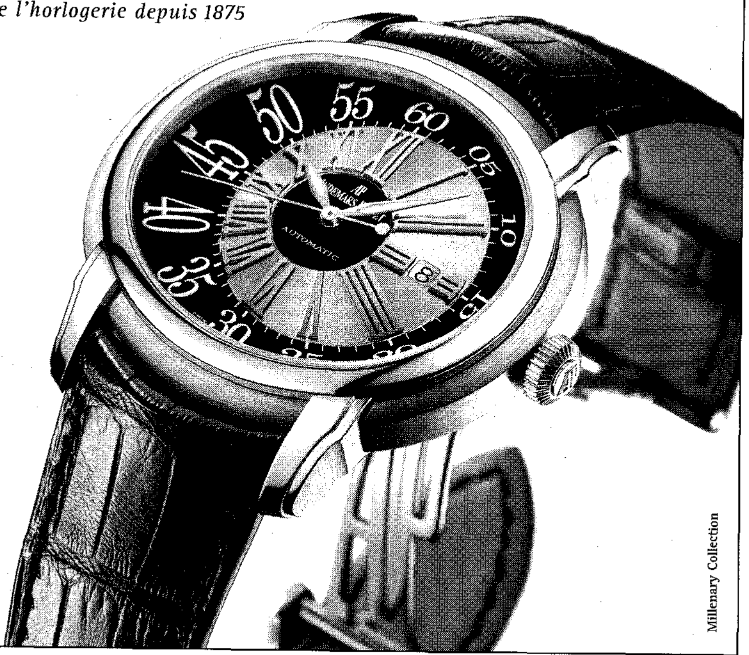
ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through Jan. 12: **Andrea Marcovicci** relies on a surplus of charm, wit, and insider knowledge; here, she performs a program of the imperishable songs of Rodgers and Hart.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Nov. 23: The jazz pianist **Dave Brubeck.** Nothing will ever quite compare with Brubeck's late-fifties quartet with the star saxophonist Paul Desmond, but the legendary pianist's current foursome still sports some impressive players, including the bassist **Michael Moore** and the multi-instrumentalist **Robert Militello.**

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Nov. 21-24: The earthy vocal stylist **Rebecca Parris,** who calls Boston home, and her practiced trio.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Nov. 21-23 and Nov. 25-26: The **Dizzy Gillespie Alumni All-Stars.** The great trumpeter has been gone for more than a decade, but the presence of some of his trusted associates, including Slide Hampton and James Moody, insures a virtuosic and lively take on Gillespie's inspired blend of bop, big band, and Latin music. The venerable brassman **Clark Terry** joins them here. Nov. 24: **Dave Brubeck** (see the B. B. King Blues Club & Grill, above).

CAFÉ CARLYLE
Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—Through Dec. 31: The singer **Steve Tyrell** hits town to turn on the holiday charm. Expect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tunes from his popular release "This Time of the Year," from 2002, as well as from his forthcoming album, "Back to Bacharach." On Mondays the café is home to **Woody Allen** and the **Eddy Davis New Orleans Jazz Band.** ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Loston Harris** is in attendance.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Nov. 20-25: The saxophonist and clarinet virtuoso **Ken Peplowski's** forthcoming album, "Pow-Wow," showcases his rapport with the guitarist Howard Alden. Here, he joins the dean of mainstream six-stringers, **Bucky Pizzarelli,** to co-lead a quintet, in a program of Cole Porter and Richard Rodgers tunes.

FEINSTEIN'S AT LOEWS REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Through Nov. 24: The Broadway legend **Chita Rivera.**

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Nov. 22: The **Cyrus Chestnut** trio. On his new album, "Cyrus Plays Elvis," the ever-game pianist does a credible job of personalizing "Heartbreak Hotel" and the like. Nov. 23-25: **Rita Coolidge,** a staple of soft-rock radio, has made a painless transition to the world of cabaret and lightly swinging jazz. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Nov. 23-25: The smoky-voiced German chanteuse **Ute Lemper** performs "Angels Over Berlin and Paris," which features gems from the Brecht/Weill songbook as well as material from Jacques Brel, Edith Piaf, and Léo Ferré.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Nov. 20-21 and Nov. 23-25: The **Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra.** The arranger, composer, and bandleader Schneider has overflowing ambition, a committed ensemble, critical raves, and a growing fan base. What she lacks is a strong feeling for melody, which, when combined with a penchant for secondhand exoticism, can render her music watery and diffuse.

METROPOLITAN ROOM
34 W. 22nd St. (212-206-0440)—Nov. 23-26 and Nov. 29-Dec. 2: The veteran Broadway vocalist **Liz Callaway.** Tuesdays: **Annie Ross,** the female part of the celebrated vocal trio Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross and the sharp mind behind the lyrics of the bopster anthem "Twisted."

THE STONE
Avenue C at 2nd St. (no phone)—Nov. 23: **Walter Thompson**—the composer and leader of an eponymous orchestra who counts Charles Ives, Earle Brown, and mentor Anthony Braxton among his influences—is best known as the father of "soundpainting," a sign language for live composition, which he created for musicians in 1974. Over the next fifteen years, the sign language grew to about a hundred and twenty gestures, which mushroomed to more than eight hundred when he opened up the language to accommodate theatre, dance, the visual arts, and other disciplines (last year, Thompson did a soundpainting with a hundred Norwegian politicians; he is currently working on one for seven New York lawyers). Here, Thompson and one of his disciples, **Evan Mazunik,** lead their respective five-person ensembles (and then later combine them) to create live compositions. Each piece will be composed in real time and performed without the use of "palettes," insider parlance for rehearsed and/or notated music. (For more information, visit www.thestonenyc.com.)

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Nov. 20-25: The trumpeter **Roy Hargrove** delivers confident neo-bebop with his seasoned quintet. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"The Age of Rembrandt"** arrays all two hundred and twenty-eight of the Met's circa-seventeenth-

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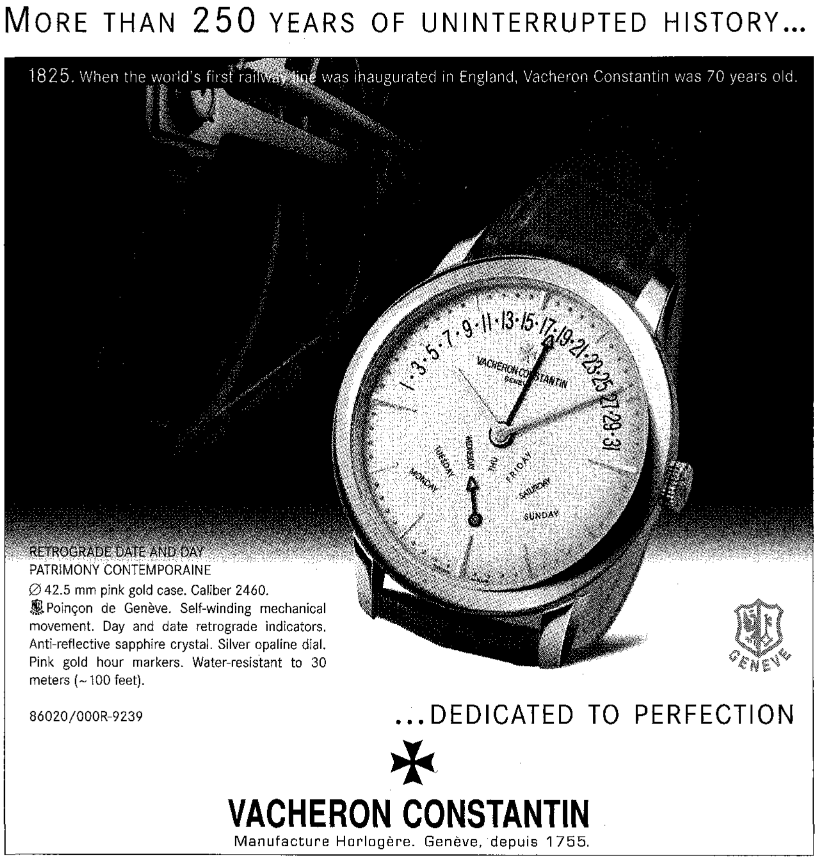
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century Dutch paintings according to the dates they were acquired. The dubious idea pays off, as odd juxtapositions of stupendous Rembrandts and Vermeers with radiant lesser masters (and intriguing faux Rembrandts) jolt the pictures to fresh attention. Through Jan. 6, 2008. ♦ **"Tapestry in the Baroque: Threads of Splendor."** Through Jan. 6, 2008. ♦ **"Eternal Ancestors: The Art of the Central African Reliquary."** Through March 2, 2008. ♦ **"The Gates of Paradise: Lorenzo Ghiberti's Renaissance Masterpiece."** Through Jan. 13, 2008. ♦ **"Impressed by Light: British Photographs from Paper Negatives, 1840-1860."** Through Dec. 31. ♦ Three new galleries devoted to the museum's renowned collection of Oceanic art have opened, after a three-year renovation. Ongoing. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Martin Puryear"** convenes forty-seven vigorously crafted, poetically imaginative works made since the early seventies, mostly in wood, by the consistently excellent American sculptor, whose independent course—rejecting the taciturnity of minimalism while applying its aesthetic insights—has denied him the deserved fame that, at last, may be his. Through Jan. 14, 2008. ♦ **"Georges Seurat: The Drawings."** Through Jan. 7, 2008. ♦ **"New Photography 2007: Tanyth Berkeley, Scott McFarland, Berni Searle."** Through Jan. 1, 2008. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Richard Prince: Spiritual America."** Through Jan. 8, 2008. ♦ **"Foto: Modernity in Central Europe."** Through Jan. 13, 2008. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love"** proves the artist to be a visual Rimbaudian poet—breathtakingly reckless in psychic adventure and insolently commanding in form. Beautiful wall pieces, video projections, and sardonic drawings revel in funny, scary, dirty fantasies of sex and violence. Walker's Old South is here and now. Historical racism seems less her target than the framing device for a self-exploration that is fretted with nausea and impelled by infernal glee. Through Feb. 3, 2008. ♦ **"Piotr Uklanski: Summer Love."** Through Dec. 9. ♦ **"Danny Lyon: Montage, Film, and Still Photography."** Through Dec. 2. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Infinite Island: Contemporary Caribbean Art."** Through Jan. 27, 2008. ♦ **"Brushed with Light: American Landscape Watercolors from the Collection."** Through Jan. 27, 2008. ♦ **"Global Feminisms Remix."** Through Feb. 3, 2008. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Water: H_2O = Life."** Through May 26, 2008. ♦ **"Mythic Creatures: Dragons, Unicorns, and Mermaids."** Through Jan. 6, 2008. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Gabriel de Saint-Aubin (1724-1780)."** Through Jan. 27, 2008. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—Located aesthetically somewhere between "Peanuts" and Picasso, the drawings of William Steig (1907-2003) celebrate the neurotic-erotic life of the mind. In 1930, Steig began contributing to this magazine and did so for seventy-three years, publishing more than sixteen hundred drawings and a hundred and twenty covers. He also found time to illustrate his psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich's manifesto "Listen, Little Man!" and write and illustrate such children's classics as "Sylvester and the Magic Pebble" and "Shrek" (which means "fear" in Yiddish). **"From The New Yorker to Shrek: The Art of William Steig"** includes nearly two hundred original drawings, several sketchbooks, and a book nook with murals—on a recent visit, one delighted visitor was heard shouting, "Read it again, Grandma!" Through March 16, 2008. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Thursdays, 11 to 8.)

"Hitman," a thriller directed by Xavier Gens, opens Nov. 21.

FRANK STOCKTON

MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**"Painted with Words: Vincent van Gogh's Letters to Émile Bernard."** Through Jan. 6, 2008. ♦ **"Drawing Connections: Baselitz, Kelly, Penone, Rockburne, and the Old Masters."** Through Jan. 6, 2008. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (212-869-8089)—**"Multiple Interpretations"** is a selection of contemporary prints, conceived in series, that are new to the library's collection. Christiane Baumgartner's fuzzy, striated landscapes are based on video footage shot from a moving car, updating the ancient medium of woodcut. Wayne Gonzales's linocuts and Juan Uslé's intaglio prints offer examples of geometric abstraction, while Thomas Nozkowski represents the idiosyncratically biomorphic. Chris Burden's images of Erector Set bridges and David Shrigley's squiggly stick-figure etchings toy with representation. It's a diverse, engaging selection, but the dearth of women artists (three and a half out of twenty-three, the half being part of a collaborative team) makes the show feel dated—or worse, negligent. Through Jan. 27, 2008. (Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Gustav Klimt: The Ronald S. Lauder and Serge Sabarsky Collections."** Through June 30, 2008. (Open Thursdays, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 11 to 9.)

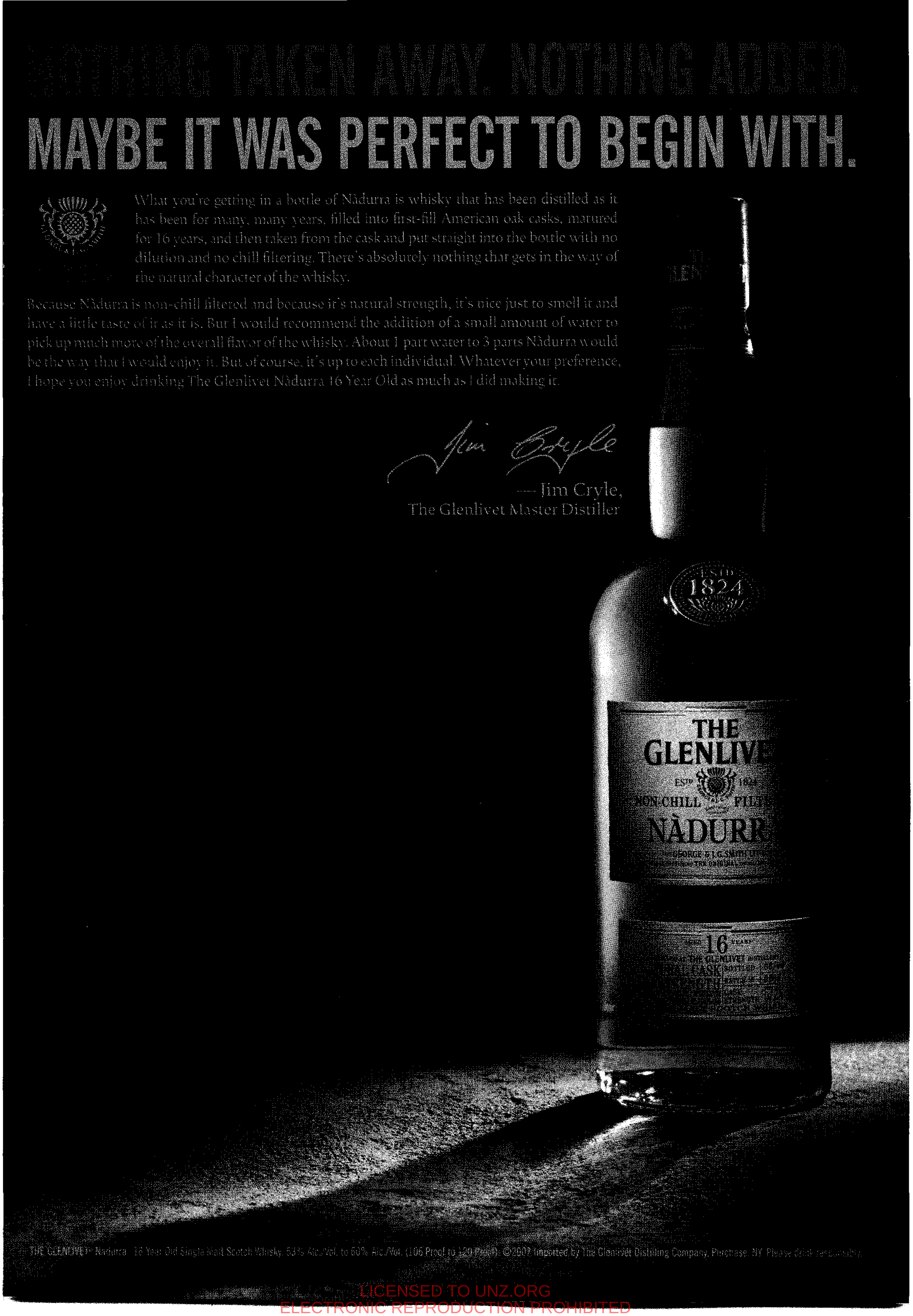
P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—The connective tissue of **"Senso Unico"** is not obvious without a key biographical detail: seven of the eight artists were born in Italy, and all had their first major success there. The Albanian-born artist Adrian Paci's grisaille paintings of scenes from Pasolini films and Paolo Canevari's drawing of the Colosseum in flames make direct national allusions, but a kind of frantic exuberance seems to be the more salient theme, seen in Rä di Martino's video of a man in drag overcome with manic glee as he dances a cancan and Paola Pivi's life-size stuffed bear covered in canary-yellow feathers. With Angelo Filomeno, Vanessa Beecroft, Pietro Roccasalva, and Francesco Vezzoli. Through Jan. 7, 2008. ♦ **"Fassbinder: Berlin Alexanderplatz."** Through Jan. 7, 2008. ♦ **"Kathe Burkhart."** Through Jan. 7, 2008. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Jacob Lawrence's 'Migration' Series: Selections from the Phillips Collection."** Through March 9, 2008. ♦ **"Kori Newkirk: 1997-2007."** Through March 9, 2008. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6, and Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

ED RUSCHA
Ruscha's "Gunpowder Ribbon Drawings," made between 1967 and 1970, are like delicate trompe-l'oeil scripts drawn with a pastry gun in the sky. Befitting his oeuvre, the one-word drawings are cryptic; floating free of any context, they function as images rather than text. The whimsy of "Promise," "3 Forks," "Quit," and "Eye" is un-



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Because Nàdurra is non-chill filtered and because it's natural strength, it's nice just to smell it and have a little taste of it as it is. But I would recommend the addition of a small amount of water to pick up much more of the overall flavor of the whisky. About 1 part water to 3 parts Nàdurra would be the way that I would enjoy it. But of course, it's up to each individual. Whatever your preference, I hope you enjoy drinking The Glenlivet Nàdurra 16 Year Old as much as I did making it.

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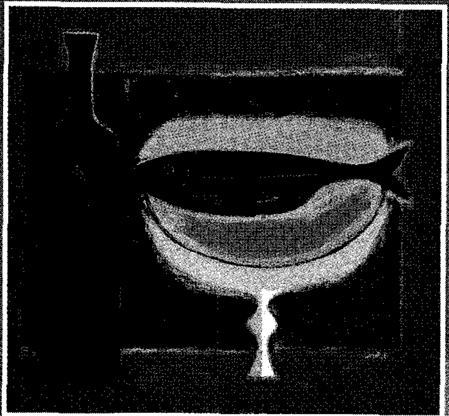
THE ORIGINATORS

THE PAINTER *Simon Laurie*



BOLDLY ABSTRACT. The painter Simon Laurie takes elements of tradition and makes them fresh and bold. Gallery owners describe his art work as distinctly accessible, while also abstract. He exhibits in London as well as Edinburgh and Glasgow, where he grew up, and collectors from around the world purchase his work.

Like all Originators, Laurie, who largely works with acrylics and wood, has made a name for himself by making a statement. "My work's definitely not wishy-washy," says the Scot, referring to his use of strong shapes and colors. "I don't paint from life, I remember things. I recall objects and landscapes in my head. I reassess them and simplify them. I hone them and strip them back. When people look at my work, they can tell straight away it's mine."

Laurie has been showered with awards. One of them, the Alexander Graham Munro Travel Award, sent him to Iceland to further develop his landscape work. In 2005, Laurie was elected "hanging convener" of the prestigious 146-year-old Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts, arguably the most venerated art institute in the country. In this role, he curates exhibitions of the best contemporary artists from throughout Great Britian, primarily focusing on works from Scotland.

In stark contrast to his renowned work, Laurie is himself reserved. He most enjoys what he calls "the quiet things," such as spending time with his family, searching for Scottish antiques, and listening to Gaelic music. He tries to set aside an hour or so each evening, usually after dinner, for a glass of his favorite single malt. "I like to get my people up to chat and have a Scotch. And I love The Glenlivet." From one Originator to another, we raise a glass to Simon Laurie.

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dercut by their materials, however. As the series' title denotes, the medium is gunpowder: charcoal mixed with saltpeter and sulfur. Through Dec. 15. (Starr, 5 E. 73rd St. 212-570-1739.

Short List

BRIDGET RILEY: PaceWildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292. Through Jan. 5, 2008. **FAZAL SHEIKH:** Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999. Through Nov. 24. **CHRISTOPHER WOOL:** Skarstedt, 20 E. 79th St. 212-737-2060. Through Dec. 15. **"HANSEL AND GRETEL":** Gallery Met, Lincoln Center Plaza, at 65th St. 212-870-7441. Through Feb. 29, 2008.

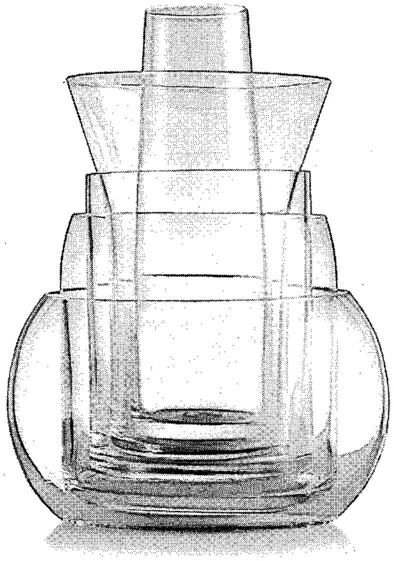
GALLERIES—CHELSEA

DEAN BYINGTON
Byington's finely controlled drawing technique mimics nineteenth-century engraving, but his delicate bowers, grotesque grottoes, and Piranesian staircases are submitted to twentieth-century conditions. Mixing his own creations with actual period illustrations, Byington photocopies the imagery, enlarging and shrinking to yield wallpaper-like patterns, dizzying in their density. Sometimes these are collaged into austerely black-and-white paper constructions; elsewhere the proliferating landscapes are silk-screened onto stretched linen, reworked by hand, and then glazed in candy-colored monochrome, pink, green, or robin's-egg blue, like Easter eggs—or blotter acid. Through Dec. 22. (Tonkonow, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-255-8450.)

EMILIE CLARK
Clark makes a painting a week. It might take one sitting or seven, but it has to be done by Sunday. She's been at it for twelve years, which amounts to six hundred and twenty-four uniformly sized wooden panels, installed floor-to-ceiling in calendrical grids. Fauna and flora predominate—the imagery includes a pink-tongued black leopard, lyrically monstrous composites (lamb-wallaby, giraffe-ape), insects, seedpods, pond scum. Clark's touch is bold, loose, and dreamy; her palette is bright yet soothing, like color in the wild. Through Dec. 22. (Morgan Lehman, 317 Tenth Ave., at 28th St. 212-268-6699.)

THOMAS DEMAND
Demand, who fabricates and photographs elaborate paper constructions of politically or culturally charged sites, devotes his new show to an investigation of one space: Niger's Embassy in Rome, allegedly the source of U.S. intelligence (since discredited) that Saddam Hussein was seeking uranium in Africa. Because photographic documentation of the space was unavailable, Demand's stylized re-creation of the Embassy's modest façade, front door, and offices is based on his own surreptitious observation of the site. The results add another layer of fiction to an already slippery subject, but Demand is careful to ground his images in mundane details: a messy desk, a faded flag, an empty ashtray, Post-its on the filing cabinet. Through Dec. 22. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-255-1121.)

MILTON ROGOVIN
The old-school social documentarian, who turned ninety-seven this year, has always been overshadowed by other photographers (Bruce Davidson, Danny Lyon) whose style was suppler and whose concerns were broader. But the pictures Rogovin made in Buffalo's gritty Lower West Side beginning in 1972 are well worth another look. This generous selection of vintage black-and-white prints includes a few urban landscapes (one of a storefront with the words "black" and "soul brother" written across its windows), but most are striking portraits of people with more flair than money. Among them is a young black woman who stands before a peace-sign graffito with the confidence of a crusader about to take on the world. Through Nov. 24. (Danziger, 521 W. 26th St. 212-629-6778.)



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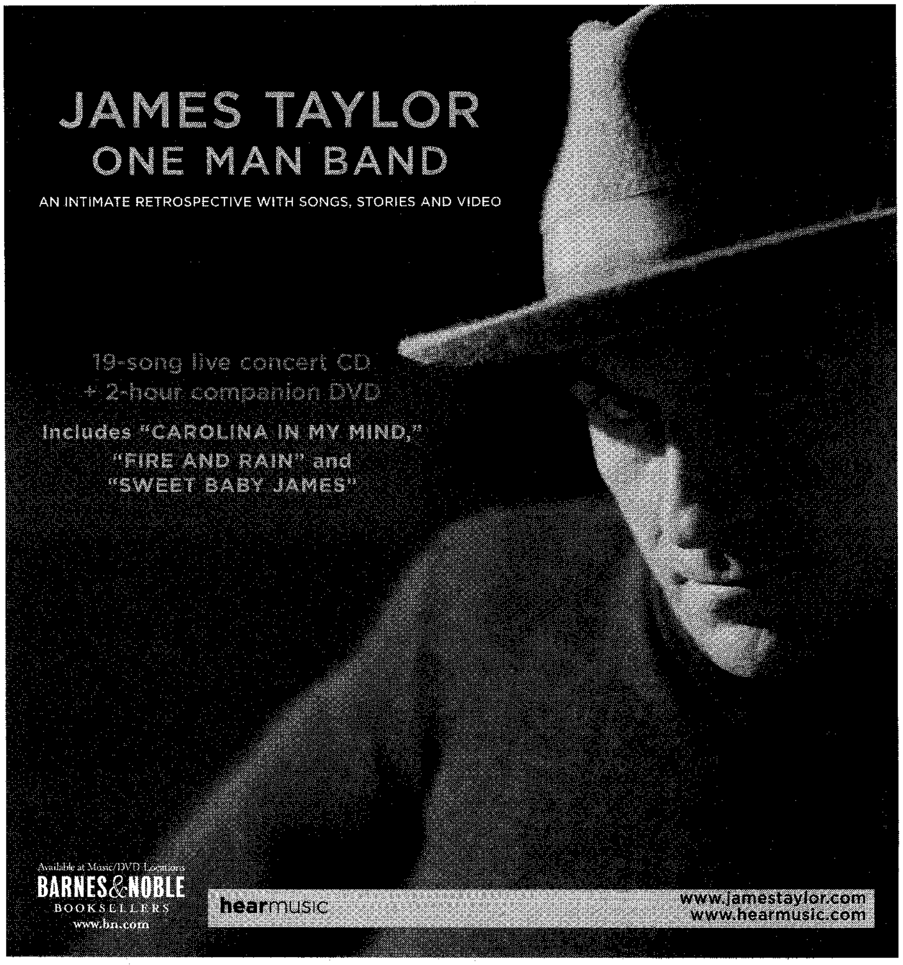

DO HO SUH
Suh's sculptures tend to be predicated on elaborate visual tricks, and "Cause & Effect" is no exception. A swirling mass of interlocking cast-resin figures winds from floor to ceiling in a gravity-defying vortex of red, orange, and ochre, culminating, tornado-like, in a point on the floor. Purportedly a meditation on individual identity and collectivity, the sculpture reads more like a computer graphic spit out into three dimensions. As in much of Suh's recent work, the piece is heavy on style, and skimpy on substance. Through Dec. 17. (Lehmann Maupin, 540 W. 26th St. 212-255-2923.)

WOLFGANG TILLMANS
Tillmans's idiosyncratic approach makes every exhibition an event, but it also has a way of scattering attention, sometimes so widely that the energy dissipates. His latest show rambles through enormous framed pieces, small prints taped to the wall, photos and printed ephemera on tables under glass, and a weirdly hypnotic video. The subjects are just as varied: cathedral interiors, news clippings, curled sheets of paper, men at a gay club, and a white flower so simple it could be a cartoon. If the connection between these images is more elusive and intriguing than ever, chalk it up to Tillmans's interest in "rejecting grand statements and embracing doubt." Through Nov. 24. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 212-627-6000.)

SOPHIE VON HELLERMANN
Brushy passages of jewel-bright acrylic and swoony, knowingly naïve subject matter give von Hellermann's new paintings the feeling of illustrations in a hipster's dream diary. In one big canvas, the Green Man—Celtic folklore's Pan—visits pearlescent lovers in a heathen Eden; the Rolling Stones' song "Wild Horses" structures another vision. Other symbol-laden imagery includes bees in a hive, a tightrope walker, a crawling baby in a dapper hat, and, lest there be any uncertainty about the psychoanalytic underpinnings of all this, a patient on a therapist's couch. Through Nov. 24. (Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 212-463-7770.)

Short List

WADE GUYTON/CHARLINE VON HEYL: Petzel, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9467. Through Dec. 15. **NINA KATCHADOURIAN:** Meltzer, 525-531 W. 26th St. 212-727-9330. Through Dec. 22. **CHARLES RAY:** Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200. Through Jan. 19, 2008. **JASON RHOADES:** Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070. Through Jan. 12, 2008. **"PAINTINGS & SCULPTURES BY NEW YORKER CARTOONISTS":** Phoenix, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St. 212-226-8711. Through Nov. 24. **"TRANSFIGURATIONS":** Sepia International, 148 W. 24th St. 212-645-9444. Through Dec. 22.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

MATTHEW CERLETTY
Twelve drawings and paintings yield a slice of pop-culture consciousness in which everything is rendered slightly off-kilter. The color of *The Economist's* logo has been almost imperceptibly tweaked—it's more red and less yellow. A photograph of Jeremy Irons (found online by the artist) is the subject of an ardent—but less than Photo-Realist—replication in graphite. Other works depict a tile pattern, a Wire album cover, and a container of Yoplait yogurt. Over all, the twenty-seven-year-old artist seems to be striking out in a more subtle and cerebral direction than his earlier forays into self-portraiture and architectural studies suggested he might. Through Nov. 24. (Team, 83 Grand St. 212-279-9219.)

Short List

LIZZI BOUGATSOS: Fuentes, 35 St. James Pl. 212-577-1201. Through Dec. 2. **PAUL MCCARTHY:** Maccarone, 630 Greenwich St. 212-431-4977. Through Dec. 24. **ADRIAN PACI:** Smith-Stewart, 53 Stanton St. 212-477-2821. Through Dec. 22. **EILEEN QUINLAN:** Abreu, 36 Orchard St. 212-995-1774. Through Dec. 9. **AIDA RUILOVA:** Salon 94, at 1 Freeman's Alley. 646-672-9212. Through Dec. 8. **ALAN SARET:** Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 212-219-2166. Through Feb. 7, 2008.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
"The Nutcracker" was considered a major departure for George Balanchine when he created it, back in 1954. Since then, it has marked the season for thousands of children each year, with its magically growing tree, gliding bed, and adorable angels. For lovers of dance, there is the incomparable score and the opportunity to discover an up-and-comer in one of the many featured roles, from the sinuous Arabian coffee dancer to the leaping candy cane, from the sprightly Dewdrop to every young ballerina's dream, the Sugarplum Fairy. "The Nutcracker" will be performed through Dec. 30. (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. Nov. 23 at 8, Nov. 24 at 2 and 8, and Nov. 25 at 1 and 5. Through Feb. 24.)

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TOP DVD BOXED SETS OF 2007

"Berlin Alexanderplatz" (Criterion)—The DVD event of the year. From the audacious opening sequence, in which the petty criminal Franz Biberkopf is released from prison, to his Sadean hallucinations in the epilogue, Rainer Werner Fassbinder reached the zenith of his inspiration here. His 1980 adaptation of Alfred Döblin's 1929 novel about the German underworld offers a visual daring and a ruminative tone to match the vast scope and the inwardness of the literary masterwork. The cast, headed by Günter Lamprecht, as the compromised Everyman, and Barbara Sukowa, as the prostitute who loves him, throw themselves into the project with controlled fury, and the reconstruction of the nineteen-twenties, in style and substance, is miraculous. The thirteen richly textured episodes and their epilogue are best savored one at a time.

"Ford at Fox" (20th Century Fox)—Among the delights in this twenty-four-feature, twenty-one-disk set are the long-awaited "My Darling Clementine," starring Henry Fonda, as Wyatt Earp, and Victor Mature, implausibly but superbly, as the Shakespeare-spouting gunman Doc Holliday; "The Prisoner of Shark Island," a fierce historical drama starring Warner Baxter as Dr. Samuel Mudd, depicted here as wrongfully imprisoned for conspiracy to murder after treating John Wilkes Booth; "Tobacco Road," a serious backwoods comedy about hillbillies whose homestead is threatened by bankers; and several rare silent films, including the 1924 railroad epic, "The Iron Horse."

"Social Issues in American Film, 1900-1934" (Image Entertainment)—The earnest title conceals a four-disk box of treasures restored by the National Film Preservation Foundation. Alongside short early masterworks by D. W. Griffith (including "The Voice of the Violin," from 1909, a drama about anarchist revolutionaries framed as a romantic comedy) and a trove of newsreels, industrial films, and cartoons are the stirring feature "The Soul of Youth," the odyssey of an orphan from institution to the streets to the courthouse, and Cecil B. De Mille's campy thriller "The Godless Girl," about a radical plot by high-school Darwinists.

"Late Ozu" (Criterion)—Often misrepresented as a formalist, Yasujiro Ozu (1903-63) was a director of spontaneous emotional engagement, closer in spirit to Nicholas Ray than to Robert Bresson. The lyrical, novelistic later works in this box include "Early Spring," a romantic drama about adultery and domestic discord among co-workers in a large urban company, and Ozu's visually revelatory "Equinox Flower," his first color film, a 1958 family story about a young woman's rejection of an arranged marriage.

"Lubitsch in Berlin" (Kino)—The first of the great German directors to go to Hollywood, Ernst Lubitsch had already mastered the art of glittering, ironic comedy, of which he had directed dozens before age thirty. This five-disk set features "The Wildcat," from 1921, a sex comedy featuring a spectacularly salacious crowd scene and sly sadomasochistic allusions and starring the feral Pola Negri as the whip-bearing title character; a pair of opulent historical spectacles; and the gender-reversal comedy "I Don't Want to Be a Man."

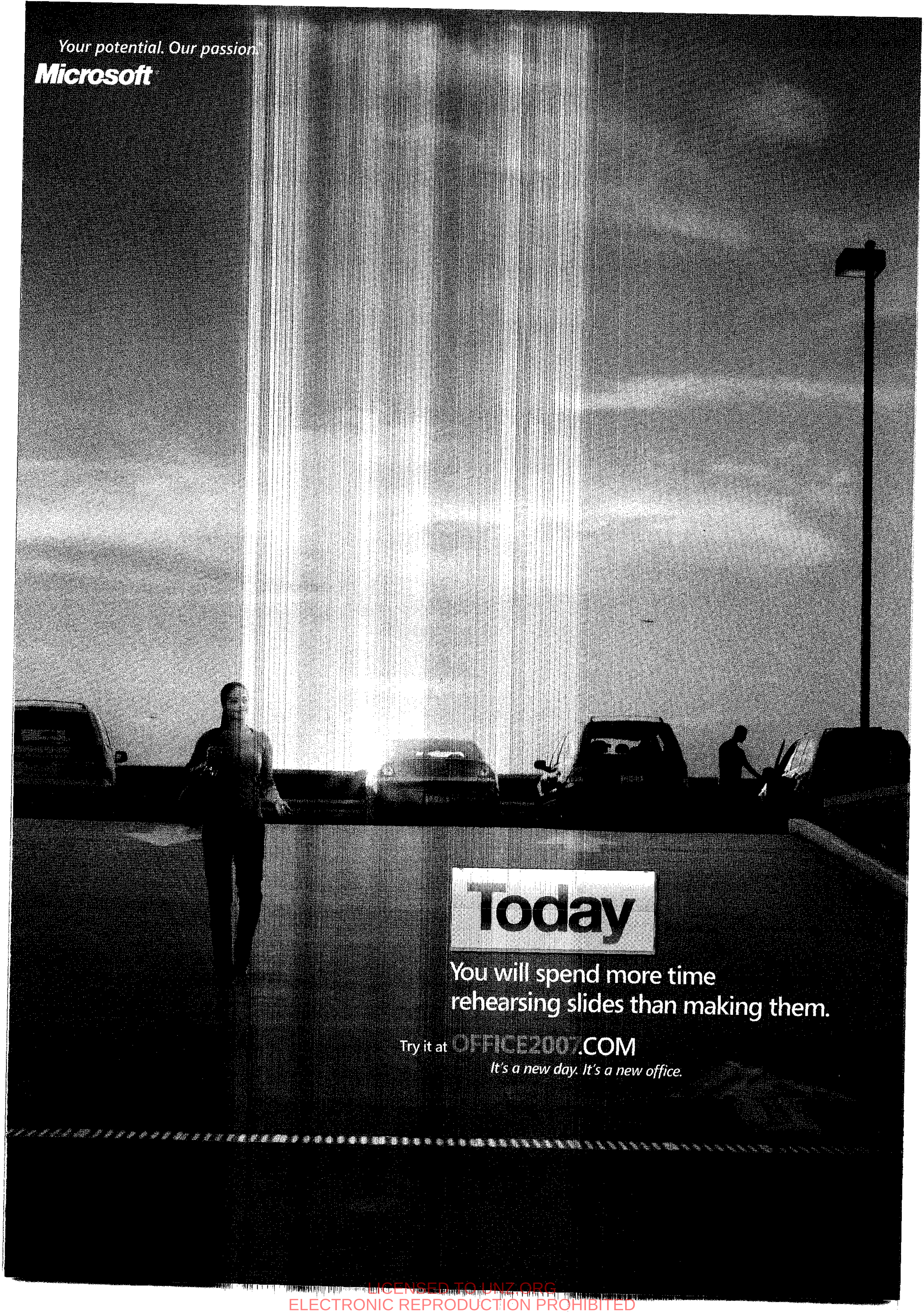
"The First Films of Samuel Fuller" (Criterion)—The writer and director Samuel Fuller, who started as a streetwise journalist and a pulp-fiction novelist, infused his genre films with lurid energy and explosive anger. A lifelong liberal, he meant his jolting representations of violence to serve as deterrents, but he clearly enjoyed them. This box features the first three films he directed, instant classics: "I Shot Jesse James," the story of Robert Ford's struggle to live down his deed; "The Baron of Arizona," a real-life Western tall tale starring Vincent Price as a con man who, in 1883, laid claim to the whole state; and "The Steel Helmet," a Korean War drama shot while the conflict still raged.

"Killer of Sheep: The Charles Burnett Collection" (Milestone)—Burnett's first feature film, from 1977, a tender yet uncompromising romance involving working people in Los Angeles, is a seminal independent film and a crucial work of African-American art. Unavailable for decades, it was released this year, to great acclaim. This set also offers the original and director's cut of his second film, "My Brother's Wedding," and four shorts, including the 2007 "Quiet as Kept."

"Popeye the Sailor: 1933-1938, Vol. 1" (Warner Home Video)—Max and Dave Fleischer's black-and-white cartoons derived comedy from the clash of the sublimely impossible with grubby Depression-era reality. Spinach allowed the sailor man to fly, climb buildings, and dance like Fred Astaire, but Olive Oyl was a single mother in a waterfront tenement or a lonely heart at a wedding agency. The detailed backdrops show grass growing from the cracks in the pavement and the city's broken brickwork, and the nasal Brooklynese and garbled asides reinforce the crude, preliterate comedy of pratfalls and fisticuffs.

"Stanley Kubrick" (Warner Home Video)—Eight years after the director's death, a reconsideration is due: a master of the marmoreal, Kubrick had a greater gift for the agonies of intimacy, as seen in such films as "The Shining" and "Eyes Wide Shut," featured here along with "2001: A Space Odyssey," "Full Metal Jacket," "A Clockwork Orange," and a host of fascinating extras.

JOHN RITTER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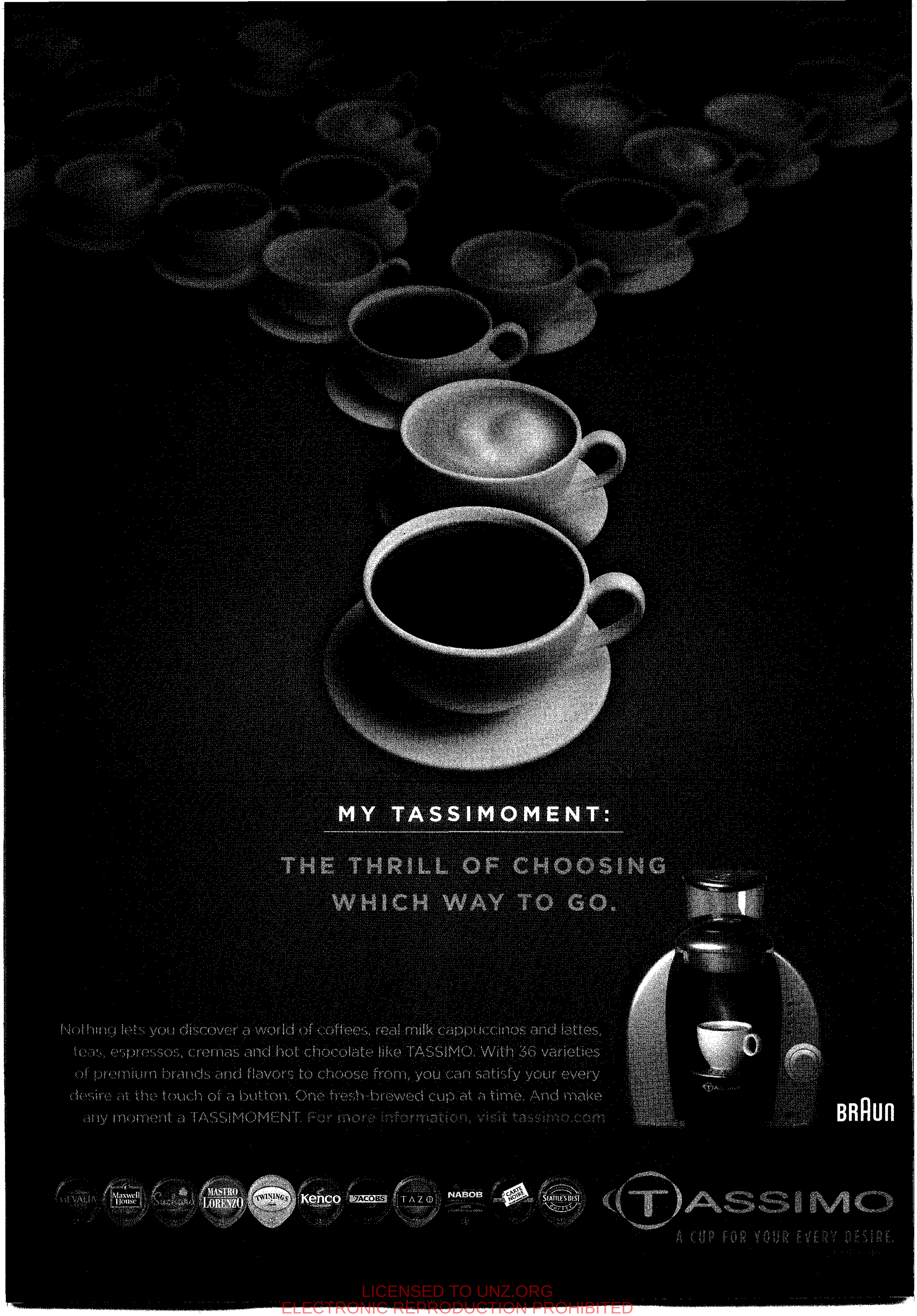
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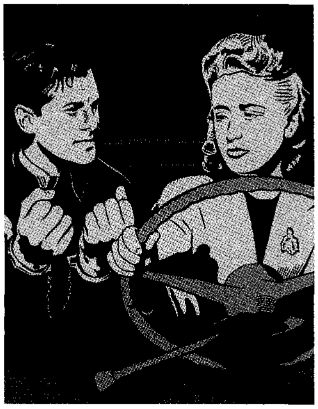
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
THE EVIL WITHIN

Time and again, Alfred Hitchcock returned, as if under compulsion, to his theme of the innocent man who flees like a guilty one. "Saboteur," from 1942, finds Robert Cummings, wrongfully accused of sabotage at a Los Angeles airplane factory, dashing from coast to coast in search of the actual villain (Norman Lloyd). The truth is finally revealed on the fist of the Statue of Liberty. By then, the movie feels jammed, yet three things give it grace and depth. One, it was Hitchcock's first association with the great production designer Robert Boyle (look at the scene of the factory doors sliding wide to let out the shift workers); two, some of the wealth-skewering, Nazi-baiting dialogue is by Dorothy Parker; and three, there is Lloyd, subtle and ferrety to the end. Film Forum will show the film for a week, starting Nov. 23, along with Matthew Sussman's brisk new documentary, "Who Is Norman Lloyd?" Answer: He is a fount of stage and movie lore, full of juice at the age of ninety-three. (He'll be there in person on Nov. 23 and Nov. 26.)

—*Anthony Lane*



MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

"LINCOLN KIRSTEIN: ALCHEMIST"
In the Vincent Astor gallery, downstairs at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, a compact but informative free exhibit illustrates the many achievements of Kirstein, who brought Balanchine to America, and, with him, created the New York City Ballet. Here you will find performance photographs of such legends as Diana Adams and Francisco Monción, books and art work by Kirstein, set designs and masks by Noguchi for Balanchine's "Orpheus," Maria Tallchief's gorgeous beaded headdress from "Firebird," and film footage of "Apollo," "Filling Station," and "Afternoon of a Faun," the latter danced by Jacques d'Amboise and Tanaquil Le Clercq in 1955. (111 Amsterdam Ave. 212-870-1630. Through Jan. 30.)

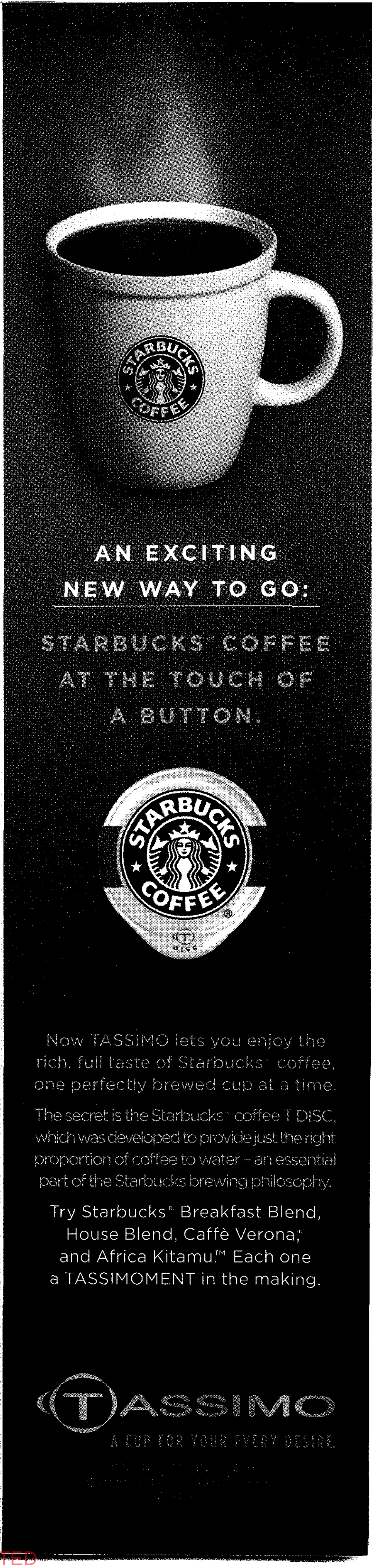
"TAPEIRE"
The Irish step dancer James Devine, the Guinness record holder for taps per second (thirty-eight), found fame in Michael Flatley's "Lord of the Dance," but much of his manner and technique resembles that of a rhythmically limited Savion Glover. His show is aurally focussed, virtuosic but anti-spectacular. The aesthetic is backward baseball cap with a kilt, and, unlike in Flatley's productions, the taps are all live. Video segments give historical context to trading sessions between Devine, the fiddler Ashley MacIsaac, the harpist Phamie Gow, and the percussionist Paul Jennings. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010. Nov. 20-21 at 7, Nov. 23-24 at 2 and 7, and Nov. 25 at noon and 5.)

"EL REY DEL TANGO"
Dardo Galletto, a former member of Julio Bocca's Ballet Argentino and a popular tango teacher in the city, brings the two sides of his résumé together in the pieces he creates for his New Generation Dance Company. For this piece, he once again brings in the Argentinean tango master Carlos Copello and his son Maxi, as well as two dancers from American Ballet Theatre, Elizabeth Mertz and the Argentinean-born Luciana Paris. The second part of the show is a *milonga*, a free-form tango party. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 212-220-1460. Nov. 24 at 3 and 8.)

BALLET HISPANICO
On top of its usual crowd-pleasing virtues, Tina Ramirez's company adds a trump card: live music by Arturo O'Farrill's excellent Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra. The vehicle is Willie Rosario's "Palladium Nights," a character-based evocation of the legendary Home of Mambo. In its first incarnation, last year, the piece, mired in cliché, failed to rise to the music of Tito Puente and Arturo's father, Chico. Here it gets an update from the Broadway choreographer Sergio Trujillo. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Nov. 27 at 7:30. Through Dec. 9.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
The arrival of the charismatic British singers Bryn Terfel and Simon Keenlyside, singing the roles of Figaro and the Count, respectively, is the big news from the Met's most recent presentation of **"Le Nozze di Figaro."** They are matched, however, by a formidable Countess—the German soprano Anja Harteros, who, in a performance of delicate understatement, nearly walks away with the show; Philippe Jordan's command of the orchestra remains supreme. (Nov. 21 and Nov. 24 at 8.) ♦ The Met's **"Norma,"** designed originally as a vehicle for Jane Eaglen, is saddled with a lumbering production, but that will hardly deter the bel-canto enthusiasts who flock to Bellini's best-known opera. Hasmik Papian now takes the title role, countered by the formidable Dolora Zajick as Adalgisa. Also with Franco Farina and Vitalij



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Kowaljow; Maurizio Benini. (Nov. 23 at 8.) ♦ The volatile Russian soprano Maria Guleghina, having put Verdi's murderous Lady Macbeth away for now, replaces Papian as the noble Druid princess. (Nov. 26 at 7:30.) ♦ In a rare feat, Diana Damrau, a radiant and agile lyric soprano (and a house favorite) who had settled into the role of Pamina in Julie Taymor's production of **"Die Zauberflöte,"** now takes on the coloratura fireworks of the Queen of the Night; Genia Kühmeier is the new Pamina, part of a cast that also features Joseph Kaiser, Stéphane Degout, Eike Wilm Schulte, and Reinhard Hagen; Kirill Petrenko. (Nov. 24 at 1:30. This is the final performance.) ♦ After a neglect of several decades, the Met is returning to the "reform operas" of Christoph Willibald Gluck with zealous commitment. Last spring brought Mark Morris's jubilant production of the opera-ballet "Orfeo ed Euridice"; now comes Stephen Wadsworth's staging of **"Iphigénie en Tauride,"** the composer's crowning achievement, which won raves several weeks ago when it was premièred in Seattle. The gilt-edged cast features Susan Graham, Plácido Domingo, Paul Groves, and William Shimell; on the podium, the Mostly Mozart maestro Louis Langrée makes his house début. (Nov. 27 at 8:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

AMATO OPERA

Anthony Amato's feisty company puts on what should be a perfect production for its Lilliputian space—the verismo double bill of Mascagni's **"Cavalleria Rusticana"** and Leoncavallo's **"Pagliacci."** Supertitles, a recent addition, update the company's Italian hill-town ambience. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. Nov. 24 at 7:30 and Nov. 25 at 2:30. These are the final performances.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

In a week without competitors, New York's resident orchestra is king. Lorin Maazel is in town, conducting an audience-friendly, grab-bag program: Rossini's "Silken Ladder" Overture, Mendelssohn's "Italian" Symphony, Glazunov's Violin Concerto (with the gifted James Ehnes as soloist), and Johann Strauss II's "Beautiful Blue Danube" Waltz. Each work has a silvery perfection of design—catnip to the Philharmonic's virtuosos, but also to its famously fussy maestro. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. Nov. 23-24 at 8 and Nov. 27 at 7:30.)

BACH VESPERS AT HOLY TRINITY

Serious entertainment on a more modest scale can be found at this Lutheran church, which for forty years has been presenting Sunday-afternoon performances of Bach's cantatas, timed to coincide with the liturgical calendar that the composer followed. This week's offerings include the Cantata No. 116, "Du Friedefürst, Herr Jesu Christ," and the Prelude and Fugue in G Major for Organ (BWV 550), as well as Johann Christoph Bach's motet "Sei getreu bis in den Tod." The church's cantor, Rick Erickson, conducts. (Central Park W. at 65th St. Nov. 25 at 5. A donation is suggested.)

RECITALS

BARGEMUSIC

The violinist Mark Peskanov's chamber-music series, situated on a cozily reappointed former coffee barge, becomes especially inviting as the weather turns crisp. Nov. 23 at 8: Randall Hodgkinson, a paragon of Boston's piano scene, begins a week devoted to modern American music with a recital of iconic works by Sessions ("From My Diary"), Copland (the Piano Fantasy), and the recently departed Donald Martino ("Fantasies and Impromptus"). ♦ Nov. 24 at 8 and Nov. 25 at 4: Peskanov teams up with some fine young string players to offer a concert dedicated to two composers: Joseph Haydn (his Quartet in G Major, Op. 54, No. 1) and the classical-jazz pianist and composer Dick Hyman (not only his String Quartet but the world première of his Piano Trio, a work commissioned through the New York State Music Fund), best known, perhaps, for his scores for several Woody Allen films. Hyman himself is at the keyboard. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER TRIO

Elaine Comparone's Queen's Chamber Band normally sports ten musicians, but for some concerts the veteran harpsichordist offers intimate recitals with two of her stalwarts, the violinist Robert Zubrycki and the cellist Peter Seidenberg. The three musicians perform music by three Viennese masters: Haydn, Mozart (the Trio in G Major, K. 496), and the younger Beethoven (the Sonata for Violin and Keyboard in A Major, Op. 12, No. 2, and the Variations on a Theme from Handel's "Judas Maccabeus," both early works). (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 25 at 2.)

MOVIES OPENING

AUGUST RUSH

A drama, directed by Kirsten Sheridan, about a child musician who is seeking his birth par-

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ents. Starring Freddie Highmore, Keri Russell, and Robin Williams. Opening Nov. 21. (In wide release.)

CHRISTMAS IN WONDERLAND
A comedy, directed by James Orr, about a pair of troubled children who go on a shopping spree with a bag of money that turns out to be counterfeit. Opening Nov. 21. (In wide release.)

ENCHANTED
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Nov. 21. (In wide release.)

EVERYTHING'S COOL
A comedy about environmental activists, directed by Daniel B. Gold and Judith Helfand. Opening Nov. 23. (Cinema Village.)

HITMAN
A thriller about a mercenary (Timothy Olyphant) who is being chased through Eastern Europe by Interpol and the Russian Army. Directed by Xavier Gens. Opening Nov. 21. (In wide release.)

I'M NOT THERE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 21. (Film Forum.)

MIDNIGHT EAGLE
A thriller, directed by Izuru Naroshima, about a hunt for a lost nuclear weapon. In Japanese. Opening Nov. 23. (ImaginAsian.)

THE MIST
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 21. (In wide release.)

STARTING OUT IN THE EVENING
Andrew Wagner directed this drama, about an aging writer (Frank Langella) whose career is reignited by his encounter with a young woman (Lauren Ambrose). Co-starring Lili Taylor. Opening Nov. 23. (Paris and Sunshine Cinema.)

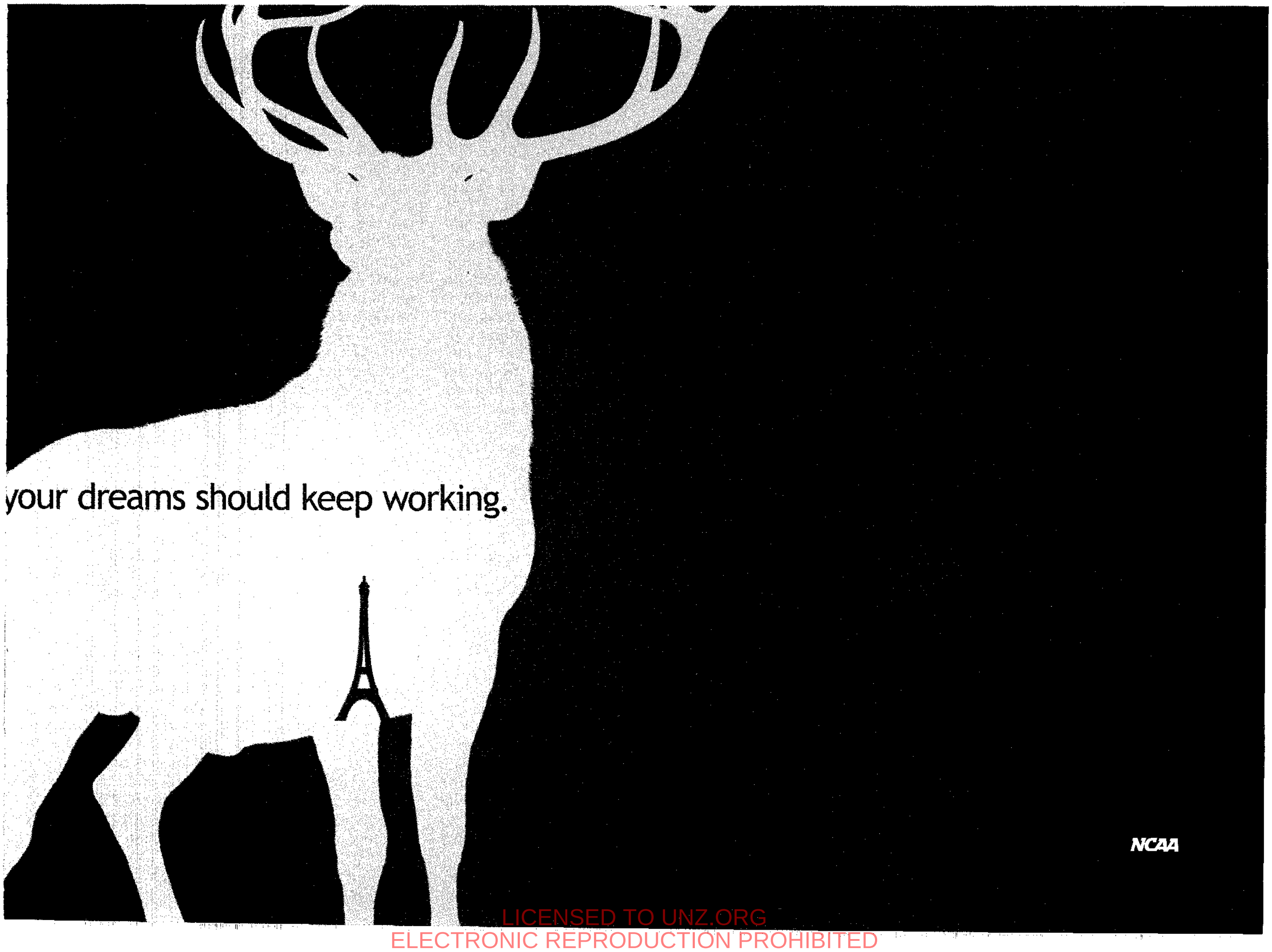
THIS CHRISTMAS
A drama about a family's long-delayed Christmas reunion, starring Laz Alonso, Columbus Short, Delroy Lindo, and Mekhi Phifer. Directed by Preston A. Whitmore II. Opening Nov. 21. (In wide release.)

NOW PLAYING

AMERICAN GANGSTER
Dazzling, swift-moving, shallow. We see the rise of the real-life Harlem gangster Frank Lucas (Denzel Washington), who in 1968 went to Northern Thailand, purchased uncut heroin, shipped it to New York, and sold it on the streets at twice the strength and half the price of what the Mafia was selling. Like many modern gangsters, Frank wants to lead an orderly and loving family life and to keep it untainted by what he does. Opposing Frank is the real-life police detective Richie Roberts (Russell Crowe), who hunts Frank down with a group of irregulars (that is, honest cops) operating out of Essex County, New Jersey. Until Frank and Richie's final confrontation, the scenes are brief and emblematic, though the director, Ridley Scott, filming in the street or at clubs and parties, packs as much as he can into the corners and backgrounds of shots and decisively shapes even the most casual moments. "American Gangster" has been made with great panache and drive. But the portrait of Frank never goes beyond admiration of his cleverness, his style, and his entrepreneurial skill, and one comes away with such sour questions as "Why is it supposed to be better that hundreds—maybe thousands—of lives were destroyed in Harlem by black rather than Italian gangsters?" Written by Steven Zaillian and based on a 2000 *New York* magazine piece by Mark Jacobson. With Ruby Dee, Chiwetel Ejiofor, John Ortiz, Cuba Gooding, Jr., and Josh Brolin.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 11/5/07.) (In wide release.)

BEE MOVIE
Jerry Seinfeld joins the hive at DreamWorks Animation for this mediocre tale about a bee (Seinfeld) who falls for a florist (Renée Zellweger) while out on a mission to prove his individuality. Seinfeld's exaggerated delivery gives the movie some bounce, but there's little cohesion to the script, which involves captive bees making honey for an evil entrepreneur, courtroom high jinks, and interspecies romance. Visually, the movie (directed by Simon J. Smith and Steve Hickner) is shiny and bright and lovely, even with the non-stop puns and movie references getting in the way. The supporting voices include Chris Rock, Matthew Broderick, and, of course, Sting.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

BEFORE THE DEVIL KNOWS YOU'RE DEAD
In Sidney Lumet's furious and entertaining little morality play, two men hard up for cash—Andy (Philip Seymour Hoffman), a payroll manager at a Manhattan real-estate company, and his not very bright kid brother, Hank (Ethan Hawke)—decide to knock over their parents' jewelry store in Westchester, and everything goes wrong. The movie, written by Kelly Masterson, has an unusual construction: it reaches a climactic moment, then jumps back a few days to lay out the story from the point of view of one character or another. The fractured time scheme brings out the unsurprising but still enlightening lesson that crime should be left to the professionals, and that greed humbles smart-asses like Andy, who think they're invulnerable. If the material had been underplayed, or done as cool, sly satire, its moral and psychological patterns would have seemed obvious and trite. But the excitable Lumet, now eighty-three,



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pitches the performances as high as he can, and this feels right. He's made an old man's malicious joke about the universality of folly. With Albert Finney as the boys' frightening dad.—*D.D.* (10/29/07) (In wide release.)

DAN IN REAL LIFE
Steve Carell and Juliette Binoche bring life to this gently comic drama, directed by Peter Hedges ("Pieces of April"). Dan (Carell) is an advice columnist, a widower, and a strict but beleaguered father of three daughters, two of them teen-agers. When he takes them to visit his large extended family at his parents' vacation home, he meets Marie (a wonderfully loose Binoche), who happens to be dating his brother (Dane Cook). Amidst the seemingly endless family activities, Dan falls in love with Marie, his focus interrupted only by a brief stint with a neighbor's feisty, high-achieving daughter (the fantastic Emily Blunt). The impressive cast features topnotch actors—including Dianne Wiest, John Mahoney, Alison Pill, and Norbert Leo Butz—who are limited by their one-dimensional roles, and Hedges offers disappointingly simplistic resolutions for every problem. But for fans of Carell and Binoche, who are paired with some success here, the film may prove a guilty pleasure.—*Shauna Lyon* (In wide release.)

THE DARJEELING LIMITED
The new Wes Anderson film shows that his fixation on families, and on the ties that bind them, continues unabated. Three brothers, played by Adrien Brody, Jason Schwartzman, and Owen Wilson, meet up on a slow train rattling across India. They are mourning the death of their father, planning a vague pilgrimage to their mother (Anjelica Huston), who has herself moved to Asia, and trying to repair their fellowship. The movie steams with minor resentments and misunderstandings that slowly evaporate in the warm-colored, calmative surroundings of an unfamiliar land. It is easy to be exasperated by the brothers' pettiness, but Anderson is one of the few contemporary directors with the nerve to insist that the blandishments of style—in his case, stately tracking shots, sudden romantic songs, and twitchy running gags—can lend form and grace to even the most discontented lives. With a fine opening cameo from Bill Murray, which leaves you wanting more.—*Anthony Lane* (10/15/07) (In wide release.)

ENCHANTED
Disney fights back. After years of seeing its animated features outclassed by the competition—not least from Pixar, its own subsidiary—the company has realized that its strength lies in plundering its back catalogue and making sport with the spoils. Hence Kevin Lima's new film, which starts in a cartoon kingdom (an unabashed homage to early Disney, exploding with anthropomorphism) and suddenly spirits its main characters into the real world—or, at any rate, into a New York where people sing on cue, and where a divorce lawyer (Patrick Dempsey) can discover his inner warmth. So, not that real. But the conceit is smartly wrought, so much so that the attempts at comic relief (using a CGI chipmunk and Timothy Spall as a henchman) seem not just lumpen but superfluous. Happily, the leads carry the day: James Marsden as a prince of grinning vanity, Susan Sarandon as the wicked stepmother (although the climax turns her into something else, again unnecessarily), and, above all, Amy Adams, who, in the role of a would-be princess, finds true momentum, not just sappiness, in the farce of innocence. With songs by Alan Menken and Stephen Schwartz.—*A.L.* (In wide release.)

FRED CLAUS
The clever idea of giving Santa a family and a Rosebud-like backstory turned into this noisy, bloated, humorless comedy. As the clock ticks down to Christmas, the stressed-out St. Nicholas Claus (Paul Giamatti) persuades his resentful and estranged older brother, Fred (Vince Vaughn), a motormouthed Chicago repo man, to pay him a visit at the North Pole. It turns out to be a company town inhabited mainly by elves whose saccharine ways the cynical Fred, laboring alongside them, tries to shake up. Then

TABLES FOR TWO
BLT MARKET

SARAH MANGERSON

1430 Sixth Ave., at Central Park S. (212-521-6125)—The term "branding" has become the haute restaurateur's euphemism for "franchising." The latter is Applebee's and Bennigan's; the former Nobu, Craft, and BLT. Both sets have multiple locations, in multiple cities, but those who brand also have celebrity chefs, cookbooks for sale by the hostess stand, and $92 rib-eyes. Case in point: the "bistros" of Laurent Tourondel (hence BLT) will soon number fifteen, among them BLT Prime, BLT Fish, and BLT Burger; with outlets already established in Washington and Puerto Rico, next month Tourondel will plant a BLT Steak in White Plains. The way this trend is curving, look for BLT Frozen in your neighborhood grocery by New Year's.

How Tourondel, a Frenchman who began his career as chef to an admiral in the Marine Nationale, became an arbiter of American steak and fish houses remains something of a mystery. His newest venture, BLT Market, aims to institutionalize the ever more popular locally produced/organically grown/seasonally available food fetish. The restaurant, in the Ritz-Carlton (another fine franchise), off Central Park, is adorned with antique farm tools and, at this time of year, buckets of McIntosh and Honeycrisp apples. The menu changes monthly, listing what's currently "peak in season," and is found clothespinned to your napkin, as if it were just blowing in a country breeze. November's bounty, in case you've misplaced your Farmer's Almanac, includes sunchoke, salsify, Meyer lemons, and spaghetti squash.

On a recent evening, there was an endive salad, dotted with candied walnuts and marinated figs, and a Hudson Valley foie gras delicately offset by an orange-grapefruit vinaigrette. A flavorful rack of lamb rested in a hearty artichoke-and-porcini ragout, while an entrée of "semi-smoked" salmon, capped with a dollop of American caviar, curiously straddled the line between lox and sashimi. All in all, the food might whet an agronomist's appetite, but it would more quickly drain his wallet: pasta with an ounce of Alba white truffle, for instance, went for $470. Across the room, two Stock Exchange types lingered over a rare wine. "Should I get the $120,000 Lexus or up it to $140,000?" one asked. It's a difficult decision, regardless of the season. (Open weekdays for lunch and dinner, and weekends for brunch and dinner. Entrées $29-$45.)

—*Mike Peed*

a Scrooge-like efficiency expert (Kevin Spacey) arrives and puts the whole outfit on probation, and when Fred, sorting children's letters as "naughty" or "nice," commits a revolutionary act of tolerance—deciding that all children should be considered nice and, thus, worthy of Christmas presents—the entire enterprise is put at risk. Ultimately, of course, family loyalty wins out, Fred saves the day, and both he and Santa learn from the experience. Yet in the interstices of this bland and formulaic tale is the startling fantasy of Fred's liberalized consumerist Christianity covering the globe through his "Top Gun"-like sleigh-piloting. Directed by David Dobkin.—*Richard Brody* (In wide release.)

GONE BABY GONE

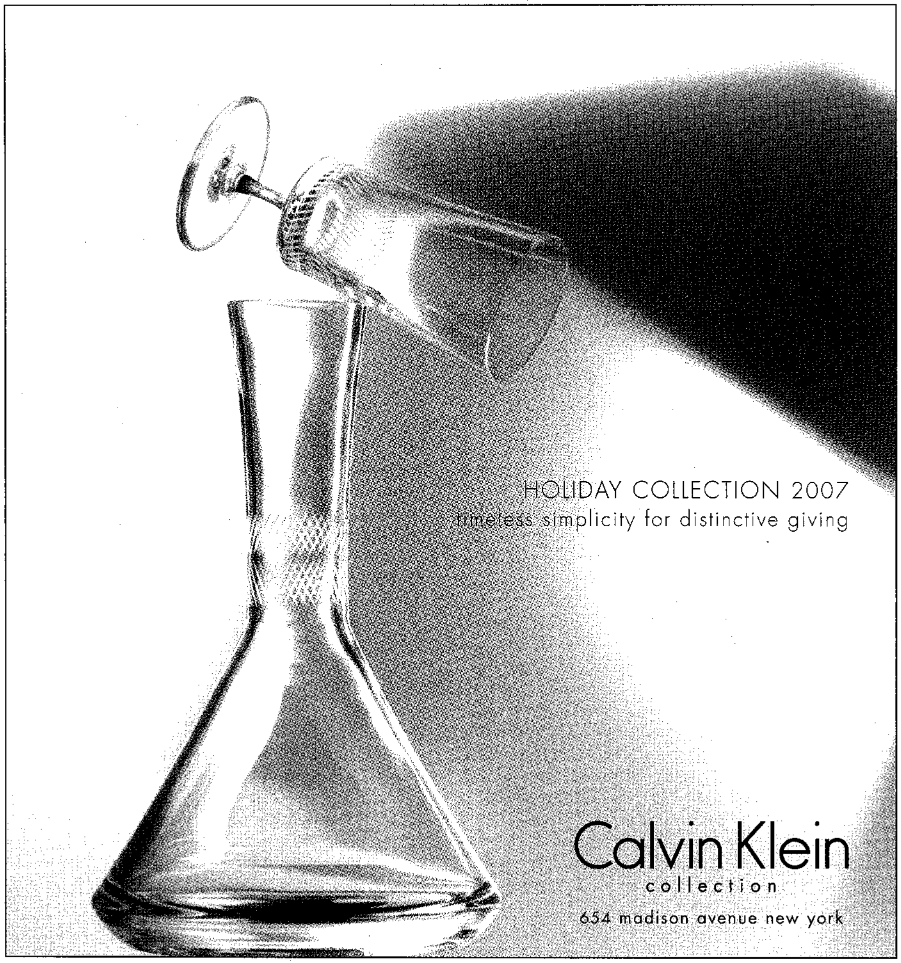
In his début film as a feature director, Ben Affleck turns to the gloomy streets of working-class Dorchester. A baby girl belonging to the world's worst mother (Amy Ryan) gets snatched, and a local tough kid who has become a private investigator (Casey Affleck), accompanied by his girlfriend (Michelle Monaghan), look for the child in some of the city's most surly locations. The movie turns into a complicated thriller involving the mother's disapproving family and some very emotional Boston policemen who are obsessed with protecting children. At times, the genre conventions (the material comes out of an early Dennis Lehane thriller) are at odds with the movie's authentic, lived-in look, but Affleck, as a director, has no fear of gazing into the abyss, and he gets some very good actors to follow him. With Morgan Freeman and Ed Harris at his feverish best.—*D.D.* (10/29/07) (In wide release.)

LIONS FOR LAMBS

Not so much a coherent movie as a triptych of related tales, two of them dangerously static. In Washington, an experienced liberal reporter (Meryl Streep) goes head to head with an eager young senator (Tom Cruise), who is backing a new military push in Afghanistan. In California, a college professor (Robert Redford) tries to spur a feckless student (Andrew Garfield) to involve himself more boldly in the world, whatever form that involvement may take. And in Afghanistan itself, a couple of the professor's former students (Derek Luke and Michael Peña), now serving with the American forces, find themselves stranded on a dark hillside with the enemy approaching. The soldiers' predicament, to which we return throughout the film, is intended to dramatize the issues being debated back home, although their heroism has few political implications, being more an example of indissoluble friendship. In short, the movie, written by Matthew Michael Carnahan and directed by Redford, has all the indignation of a wake-up call but no clear idea as to what we should be doing once awake. By a pleasing irony, Tom Cruise, turning his terrifying smile up to maximum, emerges as the most convincing figure in sight. Was that really part of the plan?—*A.L.* (11/12/07) (In wide release.)

LOVE IN THE TIME OF CHOLERA

Mike Newell's adaptation of Gabriel García Márquez's great 1985 novel is a well-crafted and handsome period piece; it's pleasant enough, but it has nothing of Márquez's richly allusive style or his comic-extravagant realization of obsessional love. Newell doesn't paint with the camera; he's a realist who competently frames a mixed set of performances. Giovanna Mezzogiorno is the belle of late-nineteenth-century Cartagena, Colombia; Benjamin Bratt, looking good in a goatee, a high, floating collar, and a black cutaway, is the aristocratic doctor she marries; and Javier Bardem, misdirected, is the poet turned ship owner who pines after her for decades. The woebegone Bardem drags himself about the city with his shoulders sagging. The many scenes of women pulling him into bed are puzzling in the extreme. He's so stricken that women, we imagine, would be more likely to take him home and give him some hot *sopa de pollo* instead.—*D.D.* (11/19/07) (In wide release.)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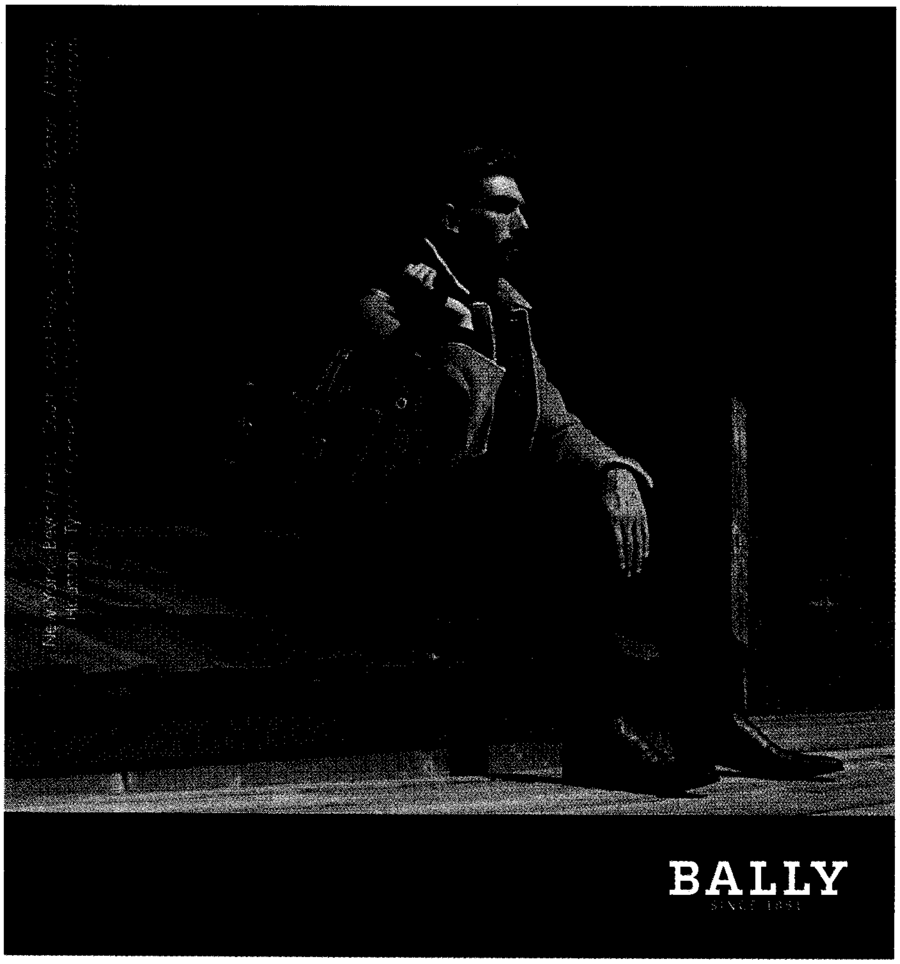

MARGOT AT THE WEDDING

There are many ways of frustrating and boring an audience, but setting up a bunch of characters who are so inept that they can't hit a croquet ball, or run through the woods without tripping, or chop down a tree without its landing on a wedding tent may be the most infuriating way of all. Noah Baumbach's new movie is about a family that can't do anything right. Margot (Nicole Kidman), a novelist with a disconcerting habit of sticking a verbal knife into people, shows up at the house of her unhappy sister, Pauline (Jennifer Jason Leigh), who is about to marry an out-of-work rocker (Jack Black). Misery, confusion, and much stumbling about ensues. Baumbach has modelled the movie on Bergman's lacerating isolated-island pictures, but, unlike Bergman, he hasn't worked out the struggle between speaking and withholding. People simply blurt out scathing remarks or behave badly, so there's little power in the various revelations and betrayals. The leafless, unbeautiful island is monochromatic. Even nature seems like a flop.—*D.D.* (11/19/07) (In wide release.)

MONIKA

The uninhibited and skillful Harriet Andersson stars as a sensual wench who woos and marries a bourgeois youth named Harry (Lars Ekborg). Ingmar Bergman's sexy, fresh, sorrowful movie about a restless teen-ager's urge to escape her constricted life is also about the romantic disillusionment of her husband. Monika (who toils at a vegetable stall) sees Harry (who works at a glassware-and-china shop) as a relief from the usual brutes; her head stuffed with movie-bred fantasies, she hopes he'll rescue her from the cramped quarters she shares with a drunken father, a harried mother, and noisy siblings. For a summer, that's just what Harry does. He takes her island-hopping in the Stockholm archipelago, where the couple live like the Swedish Family Robinson. Then the fun runs out. In a prolonged closeup that Jean-Luc Godard called "the saddest shot in the history of the cinema," Monika stares down the camera before bedding another man. Her audacious expression is confounding: a portrait of a woman without shackles—or scruples. In Swedish. Released in 1953.—*Michael Sragow* (IFC Center.)

NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN

The new movie by the Coen brothers is adapted from Cormac McCarthy's novel of the same name. Javier Bardem, his menace half-masked by a comical haircut, plays a calm, unstoppable psychopath on the trail of a stolen two million dollars. (His presence is both frightening and entertaining, if never wholly credible.) Various unfortunates cross his path and suffer the consequences, but his principal target is Llewelyn Moss (Josh Brolin), a passing hunter who took the money. Following them both is Sheriff Bell (Tommy Lee Jones), who seems in no particular hurry, and whose ruminations on crimes past and present committed in this desolate part of Texas are spoken in a gravelly voice-over. The movie, photographed by Roger Deakins, is almost stately in its ominous control, drawing us into the minutiae of mayhem and revenge. What other filmmakers would devote an extended scene to the stashing of booty in a ventilation shaft? The result is oddly unemotional, as if a vicious game were being played by solemn rules, with barely a flicker of interest in the characters' moral plight. Only Kelly Macdonald, in her beautifully judged (and accented) performance as Moss's wife, begins to restore the balance. With Woody Harrelson.—*A.L.* (11/12/07) (In wide release.)

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MIRROR: BOB DYLAN AT THE NEWPORT FOLK FESTIVAL

In the guise of a straightforward series of concert performances, the director Murray Lerner has crafted a canny, revelatory documentary about how the artist seized the day. Specifically, Lerner makes fascinating sense of the moment at the 1965 festival when Dylan plugged in and all hell broke loose. Already a star at the 1963 shindig, Dylan was, as seen here, the dominant presence the next year, and in 1965 his shining celebrity rankled the folkie purists: as one young man tells Lerner, "He's accepted, he's a part of your establishment, and forget him." When, that night, Dylan brought his electric band onstage, he assumed a role in the broadest commercial culture and, making use of the bully pulpit, turned it on itself. Lerner and his crew capture these vital performances in images of a rapt attentiveness; the transition from the wider, calmer shots of the folk years to the intense intimacy of the 1965 closeups conveys the inner truth of the historic moment. Dylan was daringly spending the psychic capital of his fame to effect a risky self-transformation—the first of many.—*R.B.* (Walter Reade.)

REDACTED

Brian De Palma's movie is based on actual events—the rape and murder, near Baghdad, in March, 2006, of a fourteen-year-old girl, and the murder of her family as well, by five members of an American Army platoon. De Palma has made a fiction out of the events, creating characters and situations whose precise nature he inferred from soldiers' accounts, blogs, and news reports. And he has assembled his fiction from a variety of fictionalized documentary

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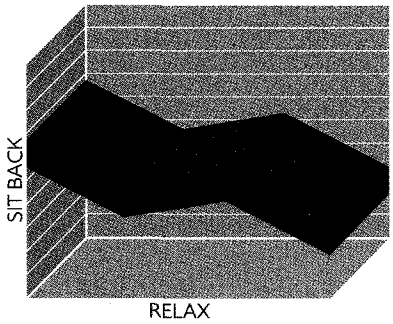

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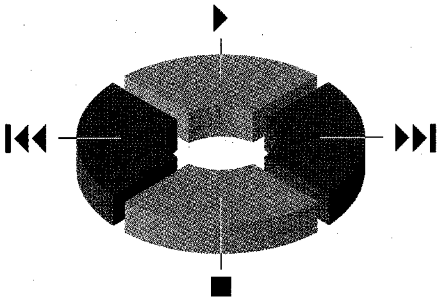

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forms: a video diary taken by one of the soldiers, a terrorist Web site showing the murder of the platoon's master sergeant, a portentous French documentary complete with stern Baroque music, and so on. Some of the men are in terrible shape—scared and trigger-happy, and quick to launch the ritual accusations of faggotry or pussydom at anyone in the platoon who doesn't want to do something violent. Watching these guys through one lens or another is fascinating but hellish. One longs for a unifying point of view, but De Palma's idea is that such an experience can no longer simply be told but must be pieced together from clumsy, off-center representations, all of which are guilty in some way. The spectrum runs from impotent observation (the French documentary) to complicity (the soldier's video diary) to actual violence (the terrorist Web site). In all, the movie is a grimly mischievous emblem of our media-haunted world.—*D.D.* (11/19/07) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

DARFUR NOW: Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. **MARTIAN CHILD:** In wide release. **MR. UNTOUCHABLE:** In wide release. **WAR/DANCE:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—Through Dec. 6: African Diaspora Film Festival. (For complete listings, visit www.nyadff.org.) Nov. 23 at 3: "City Teacher" (2007, Juney Smith). ♦ Nov. 23 at 10:20: "Marrakech Inshallah" (2007, Steffen Pierce and Christian Pierce; in Arabic and Berber). ♦ Nov. 24 at 5:50: "Dollars & Dreams" (2007, Jeremy Rocklin). ♦ Nov. 24 at 7:50: "Cousines" (2006, Arnold Antonin; in Creole and French). ♦ Nov. 25 at 4:20: "Cobrador: In God We Trust" (2006, Paul Leduc; in Portuguese, English, and Spanish), followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ Nov. 25 at 9:30: "Aleijadinho: Passion, Glory, Torment" (2001, Geraldo Santos Pereira; in Portuguese). ♦ Nov. 26 at 8:40: "August the First" (2007, Lanre Olabisi), followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ The films of Humphrey Jennings. Nov. 23 at 7 and Nov. 25 at 5:30: Program 1, including "Listen to Britain" (1942). ♦ Nov. 23 at 9 and Nov. 24 at 8: Program 2, "Fires Were Started" (1943). ♦ Nov. 24 at 5:30 and Nov. 25 at 8: Program 3, including "A Diary for Timothy" (1944-45). ♦ Nov. 24-25 at 3:30: Program 4: "Humphrey Jennings: The Man Who Listened to Britain" (2000, Kevin Macdonald) and "Listen to Britain" (1942).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—A tribute to Ingmar Bergman. Nov. 21 at 7: "Fanny and Alexander" (1982; in Swedish), introduced by Pernilla August. ♦ "A Muppet Thanksgiving." Nov. 22 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15 and Nov. 23 at 2 and 4:10: "Muppet Treasure Island" (1996, Brian Henson). ♦ Nov. 24-25 at 2 and 4:30: "Muppets from Space" (1999, Tim Hill). ♦ Gotham Awards: Javier Bardem. Nov. 23 at 6:20 and 9:15: "The Dancer Upstairs" (2002, John Malkovich). ♦ Nov. 24 at 6:50 and 9:15: "Live Flesh" (1997, Pedro Almodóvar; in Spanish). ♦ Nov. 25 at 6:50 and 9:15: "Mondays in the Sun" (2002, Fernando León de Aranoa; in Spanish). ♦ Nov. 26 at 7: "Before Night Falls" (2000, Julian Schnabel), followed by a Q. & A. with Bardem. ♦ "Stanwyck Redux." Nov. 27 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Forbidden" (1932, Frank Capra). The 6:50 screening will be followed by a discussion with the critic Elliott Stein.

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. Nov. 21-22 at 1, 2:40, 4:20, 6, and 7:40: "The Red Balloon" (1956, Albert Lamorisse) and "White Mane" (1952, Lamorisse; in French). ♦ Nov. 21-22 at 9:20: "Divorce—Italian Style" (1961, Pietro Germi; in Italian). ♦ Special screenings. Nov. 23-25 at 4:35 and 8:15, Nov. 26 at 1, 4:35, and 10:35, and Nov. 27-29 at 1, 4:35, and 8:15: "Who Is Norman Lloyd?" (2007, Matthew Sussman). The 8:15 screening on Nov. 23 will be followed by a Q. & A. with Lloyd, the director, and the producers, Michael Badalucco and Joseph Scarpenito. ♦ Nov. 23-25 at 6:10 and 9:45, Nov. 26 at 2:30 and 6:10, and Nov. 27-29 at 2:30, 6:10, and 9:45: "Saboteur" (1942, Alfred Hitchcock).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—"Fashion Icons." Nov. 27 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "Funny Face" (1957, Stanley Donen). ♦ Nov. 27 at 9: "In & Out of Fashion" (1998, William Klein; in French).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—In revival. Nov. 21-27 (call for showtimes): "Monika" (†). ♦ Nov. 22-25 at noon: "Mississippi Masala" (1991, Mira Nair). ♦ Nov. 25 at 3: "Salaam Bombay!" (1988, Nair) and "Migration" (2007, Nair), introduced by the director. ♦ "Waverly Mid-

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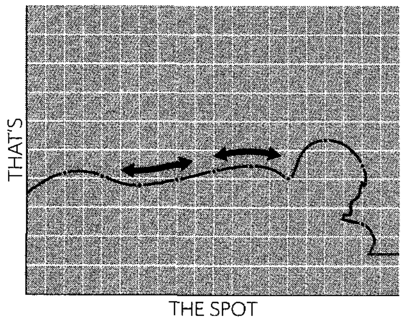

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nights." Nov. 21-24: "Blue Velvet" (1986, David Lynch). ♦ "Stranger Than Fiction," a documentary series. Nov. 27 at 7:30: "This American Life" (2007, Christopher Wilcha), followed by a discussion with the director and Ira Glass.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Still Moving." Nov. 21 at 1:30: "The Seventh Seal" (1957, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish). ♦ Through Nov. 30: "Iberoamérica," new films from Spain, Portugal, and Latin America. Except where noted, all films are in Spanish. Nov. 21 at 6: "The Last Bandoneón" (2006, Alejandro Saderman). ♦ Nov. 21 at 8: "Step Forward" (2004, Elia Schneider). ♦ Nov. 23 at 6: "The Immortal" (2004, Mercedes Moncada). ♦ Nov. 23 at 8: "Kamchatka" (2002, Marcelo Piñeyro). ♦ Nov. 24 at 2:30: "Kill Them All" (2007, Esteban Schroeder). ♦ Nov. 24 at 5: "A Red Bear" (2002, Israel Adrian Caetano). ♦ Nov. 25 at 2: "Waiting List" (2000, Juan Carlos Tabio). ♦ Nov. 25 at 4: "The Heart of Jesus" (2003, Marcos Loayza). ♦ "Asian Cinevisions." Nov. 23 at 7 and Nov. 24 at 2: "Dancing Bells" (2006, Deepak Kumaran Menon; in English, Malay, Mandarin, and Tamil). ♦ Special screenings. Nov. 24 at 4:30: Digital works by Ernie Gehr, including "Glider" (2001). ♦ Nov. 26 at 7: An evening with Joshua Mosley, featuring animated films.

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Dec. 2: "Glorious Technicolor!" Nov. 24 at 2: "Meet Me in St. Louis" (1944, Vincente Minnelli). ♦ Nov. 24 at 4:30: "The Wizard of Oz" (1939, Victor Fleming). ♦ Nov. 24 at 7: "Singin' in the Rain" (1952, Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly). ♦ Nov. 25 at 2: "Gone with the Wind" (1941, Fleming).

PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—In première. Nov. 21-28 (call for showtimes): "Yiddish Theatre: A Love Story" (2006, Dan Katzir).

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—"Cabaret Cinema." Nov. 23 at 8: "Sansho the Bailiff" (1954, Kenji Mizoguchi; in Japanese), introduced by the writer Thomas Cahill.

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." Nov. 21-24: "The Big Lebowski" (1998, Joel Coen).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Special screenings. Nov. 21 (call for showtimes): "The Whole Shootin' Match" (1978, Eagle Pennell). ♦ Nov. 23-26 (call for showtimes): "The Other Side of the Mirror: Bob Dylan at the Newport Folk Festival" (†). ♦ Nov. 23-26 (call for showtimes): "Transes" (1981, Ahmed El Maanouni; in Arabic). ♦ Nov. 27 at 2 and 7: "The Iron Horse" (1924, John Ford; silent).

READINGS AND TALKS

MCNALLY ROBINSON BOOKSELLERS
Jason Brown, Sam Brumbaugh, and Rachel Sherman read from their fiction. (52 Prince St. No tickets necessary. Nov. 26 at 7.)

FILM FORUM
The documentary "Who Is Norman Lloyd?" traces the remarkable history of the actor and show-business veteran Lloyd. It is screening at this downtown temple of cinema, and the ninety-three-year-old Los Angeles resident stops by on Nov. 23 for a Q. & A. following the 8:15 show and on Nov. 26 at 8:15 for a longer program of reminiscences. (209 W. Houston St. 212-727-8110.)

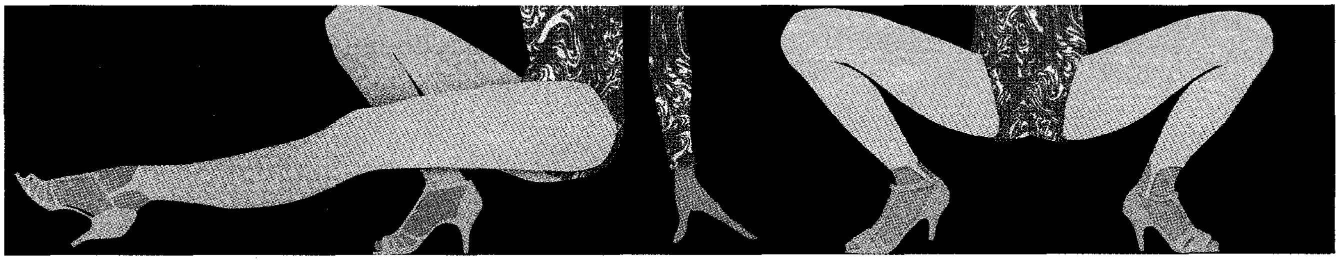
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART
Alex Ross, the classical-music critic for this magazine, talks about Richard Strauss, Dmitri Shostakovich, and other composers who worked under the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. Nov. 27 at 8.)

92ND STREET Y
Christopher Kimball, the founder and publisher of *Cook's Illustrated* and *Cook's Country* magazines, discusses his new book, "America's Best Lost Recipes." (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Nov. 27 at 8:15.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

BIG APPLE CIRCUS
Manhattan's homegrown one-ring wonder marks its thirtieth anniversary with the aptly titled show "Celebrate!" (Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. For more information, call 800-922-3772 or visit www.bigapplecircus.org. Through Jan. 13.)

WALK OFF THE TURKEY
Shorewalkers, a nonprofit advocacy group dedicated to step-by-step explorations of the city's littoral zone, presents the opportunity to undo some of the caloric damage that Thanksgiving can inflict, with a hike of a dozen miles or so along the Hudson, from South Ferry to the Little Red Lighthouse, beneath the George Washington Bridge. (Nov. 24, starting at 9 A.M. For more information, visit www.shorewalkers.org.)



ON THE HORIZON

CLASSICAL MUSIC
LONG DISTANCE
Nov. 29, Dec. 2, and Dec. 4

Two fascinating young German musicians—the violinist Christian Tetzlaff and the pianist Alexander Lonquich—come to the 92nd Street Y to offer a three-concert survey of Beethoven's complete sonatas for violin and piano. (212-415-5500.)

MOVIES
OUT OF THE BOX
Dec. 2-8

MOMA offers several of the works restored by the National Film Preservation Foundation for its "Social Issues in American Film, 1900-1934" DVD set, including William Desmond Taylor's 1920 feature, "The Soul of Youth," in which a baby sold into adoption becomes a vagabond and a criminal, and Cecil B. De Mille's "The Godless Girl," an unintentional laugh riot about a cell of student atheists. (212-708-9480.)

NIGHT LIFE
HEART OF GOLD
Dec. 12-13, Dec. 15-16, and Dec. 18-19

Neil Young, the prolific, versatile, and irascible classic rocker, is touring behind his new album, "Chrome Dreams II." He comes to the United Palace Theatre for six nights next month. (212-307-7171.)

ART
LOCAL HEROES
Dec. 16-March 23

"New York State of Mind," at the Queens Museum, may sound like a Billy Joel tribute, but the interdisciplinary exhibition will highlight the work of visual artists who have lived, worked, or been inspired by the city, from historical heavyweights (the Dadaist Marcel Duchamp) to contemporary up-and-comers (the painter Kehinde Wiley). (718-592-9700.)

THE THEATRE
C'EST CABARET
Dec. 20-Jan. 19

The ideal audience members for the London-based performance troupe Duckie, according to its Web site, are "spendthrifts, mollys, rakes, punchable nuns, ratafaries, and giddy young men." P.S. 122 co-presents its burlesque-infused supper-club show "C'est Duckie!" at CSV Cultural Center. (212-352-3101.)

Duckie, the London-based performance troupe.

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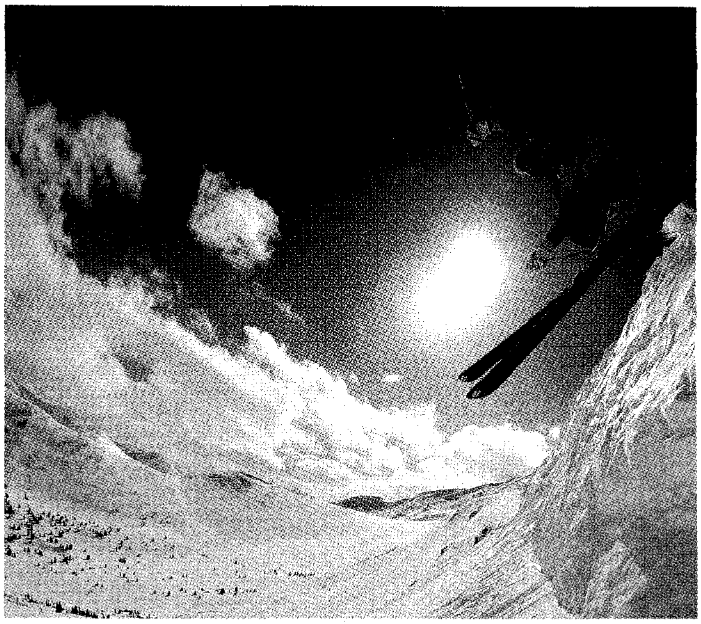

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BY MORT GERBERG

ALTERED STATE

Thinking back, I probably always wanted to be At One With Nature. Especially in winter. I was a street-smart kid in New York City, and even as I'd scoop the white stuff off car fenders for snowball fights, I secretly longed to shake it out of pine trees. Sometimes I'd dream about going on an Ultimate Winter Adventure to Somewhere Over the Skyscrapers. And who knows, maybe it was this yearning that somehow contributed to my extraordinary transformation.

It was February. I was in Central Park on my cross-country skis, sliding over a cover of snow that was thinner than a slice of turkey in a midtown diner sandwich. I felt the familiar scraping of my skis over rocks, tufts of grass, and clumps of frozen doggy do. I heard the usual cacophony of car horns, hovering helicopters, and cell phone chatter. But I didn't see the abandoned water bottle. My ski twisted and I crashed to the ground.

Angrily, I grabbed it and flung it against a tree. "Dopey bottle!" I cursed. "You're supposed to be recycled!"

The cap popped off and, with the sound of air expelled from a whoopee cushion, white vapor streaked out and morphed into a small old man with a grizzled white beard, wearing a red ski jacket and woolen hat with earflaps.

"Thanks," he grimaced. "But did you have to throw so *hard*?"

He rubbed his back and wagged a finger. "Don't even ask why I was in there! Better you shouldn't know!"

"No problem, Groucho," I smirked.

"Listen, Sonny," the old man snapped, "you'd be kvetchy, too, if you were cooped up in a bottle without any heat or hot water in the middle of winter, yet! Anyhow, I'm the Genie of Terrific Winter Experiences," he said as he tipped his hat, "and you get one wish."

"Only *one*?" I said.

"Hey, this is New York," growled the little man. "It's too expensive, three."

So the Genie of Terrific Winter Experiences, intuiting my inner desire to become At One With Nature, belched twice, and in an instant we were on a beautiful peak at Copper Mountain—12,000 feet up, with 200 inches of powder, skiing through quiet evergreen glades, under a cloudless blue sky and blazing sun. My eyes widened and my chest heaved as I inhaled crisp, pine-scented air.

"Not so bad, huh?" asked the Genie, pointing to the pristine scenery.

"Maybe," I said. "But this'll take some getting used to. I don't usually trust breathing air I can't see." I carved a wide turn, kicking up a slow-motion spray of white. "Or skiing on snow I can't hear."

"A real Easterner," sneered the Genie. He burped again, and suddenly we were snowboarding down a double-black-diamond trail at Keystone, bouncing from one mogul to another at breakneck speed, yet in absolute control in the perfect conditions. "I never knew I was this good!" I shouted elatedly. "*You're* not!" the Genie roared back. "But *I* am!"

He hiccupped, and in a flash we were snowshoeing up a silent snowy slope at Steamboat, peering through binoculars at wildlife prowling through green forests, at birds gliding through an azure sky. A little cough, and the next moment we were ice-skating at Vail, spinning through more double axels than a sixteen-wheeler on I-95.

The Genie's sigh then brought us to a luxurious soak in a steaming Aspen hot spring, where we sipped white wine with people who looked like models from glossy magazine ads. A blink later, we were on a horse-drawn sleigh, riding to a restaurant atop Beaver Creek for what must have been a nine-star gourmet meal.

"A true Ultimate Winter Adventure, Genie," I purred, dabbing my mouth. "But what is this winter wonderland, that's put me in a state of euphoria?"

"Not *euphoria*," grumbled the Genie. "It's the state of *Colorado*."

He gulped a last drop of Cognac. "I have to go," he scowled. "Your freebie junket is over."

I wanted more, but the Genie of Terrific Winter Experiences said I'd had my wish. His gig was up, and he was moving on. He'd agreed to write an on-line blog on Colorado winters for *The Puffington Flash*. I had to choose my next trail on my own. A cloud of vapor and he vanished.

I worked it out. I know which side of the mountain my snow falls on. I'm now the Western Winter Consultant for Colorado's tourist office. Call me. I'll show you how to be One With Nature, too. It'll be absolutely magical.

Mort Gerberg's "Last Laughs" *cartoon collection was published recently by Scribner.*

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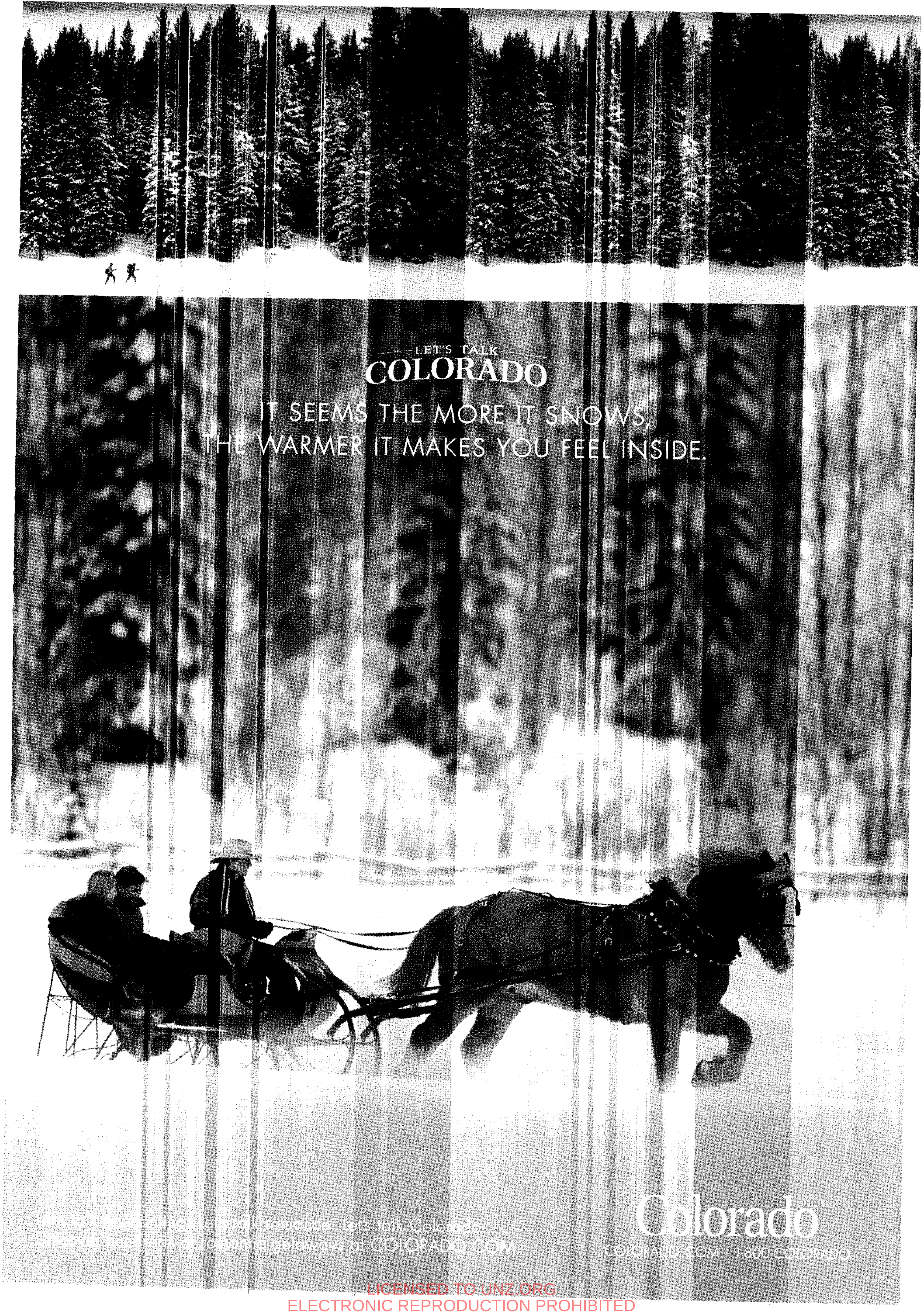
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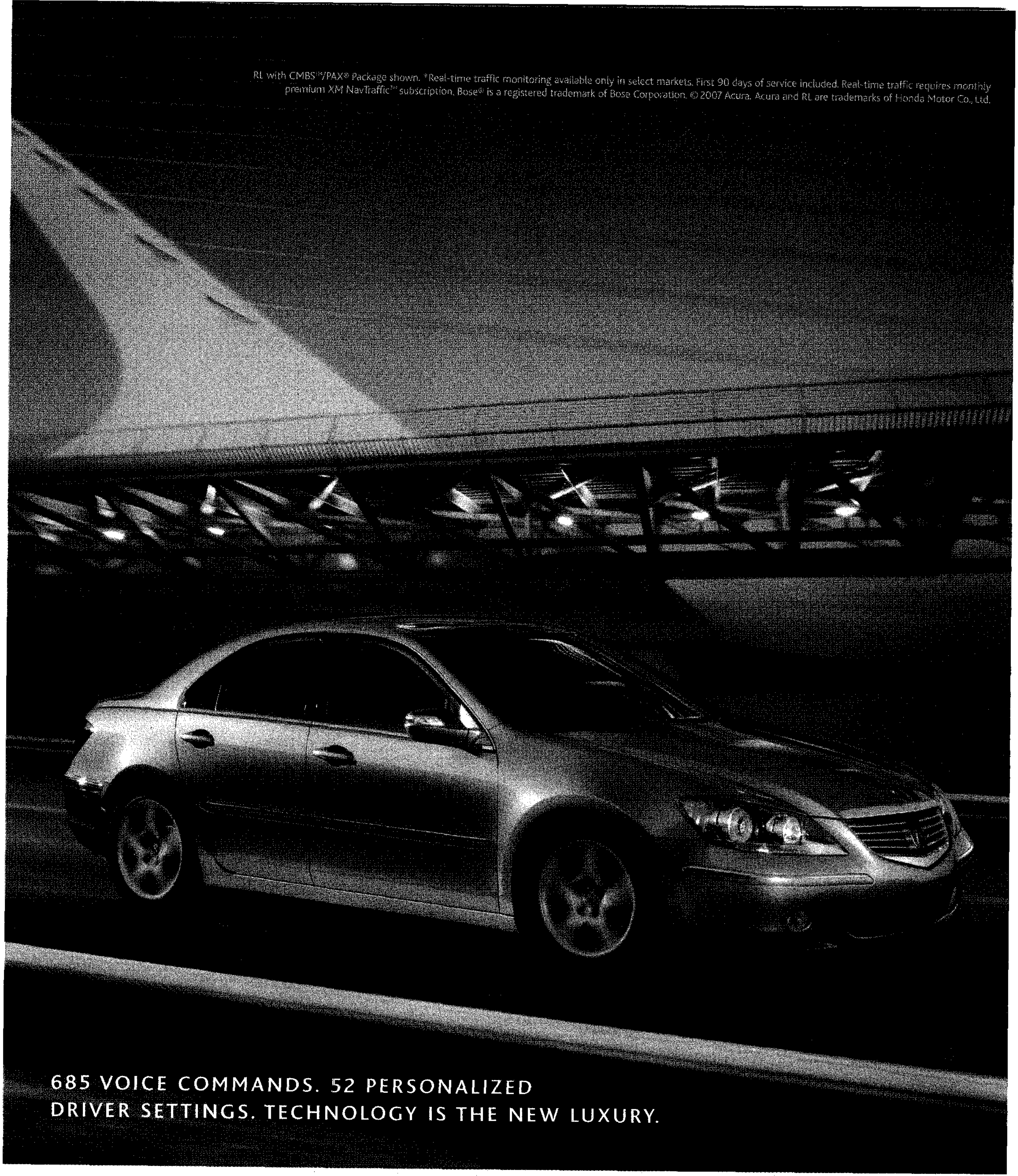
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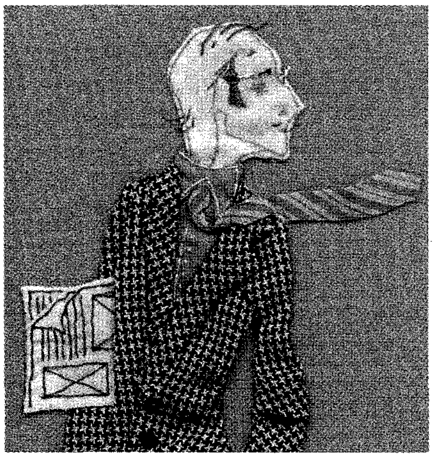
ON AND OFF THE AVENUE
GIFTS FOR HIM

Perhaps the most mysterious of all mammals is the male *Homo sapiens.* Indeed, many anthropologists classify the group as a subspecies. Like the female, the male is built to walk upright, and yet he is more often to be found supine on a Barcalounger (Macy's; $799-$1,499).



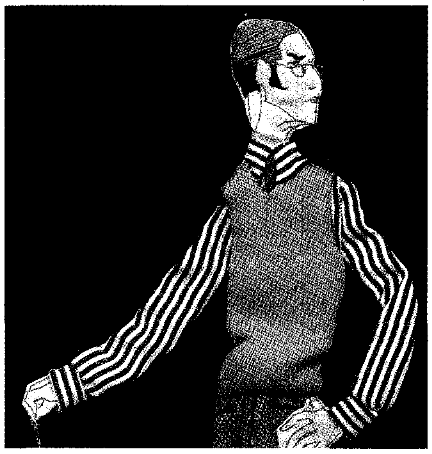
He has an ability to use complex tools, and yet his instrument of choice is often a long-handled stick designed to knock a ball into a hole (Callaway FT Hybrids, World of Golf, 147 East 47th Street; $179.95-$199.95). A highly developed brain makes him capable of abstract reasoning, language, and introspection, yet in terms of intergender communication the capacity of the male *Homo sapiens* falls somewhere between that of a mushroom and that of a rutabaga. He is the only animal known to leave wet towels on the floor (plush bath towel the color of dirt, officially called espresso, at Crate and Barrel, 611 Broadway, at Houston, and 650 Madison Avenue, at 60th; $21.95).

But what does the male want? This is a question one hears with increasing frequency during the holiday season. Unfortunately, he does not want what you want him to want—season tickets to the ballet, curtains for the dining room, a DustBuster so that he can clean his closet, posture classes, an anti-snoring pillow (Snore-No-More Pillow, at Amazon.com; $29.02). Nor, in many cases, does the male want what you reckon he might want—for instance, mauve-colored leather goods (snakeskin dress shoes, from purplestore.com; $61.95), a travel tie case, in khaki twill, that holds six to eight ties and keeps them from wrinkling en route (Ghurka, 683 Madison Avenue, at 62nd; $225), or a subscription to the Golf Ball of the Month Club (monthclubstore.com; $49.99-$596.99). That last gift would surely be received with resignation, if not despair, I was informed by a male who spends most of his life on the links. He explained that skilled golfers are loyal to one type of ball, and bad golfers don't know a Titleist from a hailstone. He suggested instead a few days at the Bandon Dunes Golf Resort, in Oregon ($365 per person for a two-night stay), or a blank check for a fitting at the New York Golf Center (131 West 35th Street).

Though the male can be noble in reason and infinite in faculties, he is also easily amused by shiny toys, especially ones that do dumb things on his desk. Evolutionary psychologists may never be able to give us a convincing explanation, but there seems to be a certain type of man who enjoys hurling miniature stuffed monkeys across his office or staring in rapture as a pendulum creates oval designs in sand (Slingshot Flying Monkey, $3.99; Pit and the Pendulum, $39.99, at officeplayground.com). Such a guy might appreciate the Levitating Globe, a model of the earth that floats and rotates in a magnetic field (scientificsonline.com; $99.95), or 20Q, a handheld electronic doodad that can usually guess what you're thinking of by asking you a series of questions (Sharper Image, 10 West 57th Street; $19.99).

There are twenty-nine robots for sale at Hammacher Schlemmer (147 East 57th Street), and some of them probably wish they had robots. How happy, for instance, can the remote-controlled gutter-cleaning robot be ($129.95)? Then, there's the seven-foot-tall fully animatronic Robby (modelled on the one in the movie "Forbidden Planet"), who comes with a personalized service hotline—presumably for Robby's owner, however, and not for Robby ($49,999.95). "I just think that in these depressing times you want a gift to be full of hope," said a shopper whose husband was on a military base, and who was trying to decide between the Robotic Quadruped ($89.95) and a desktop U.S.B. missile launcher ($49.95).

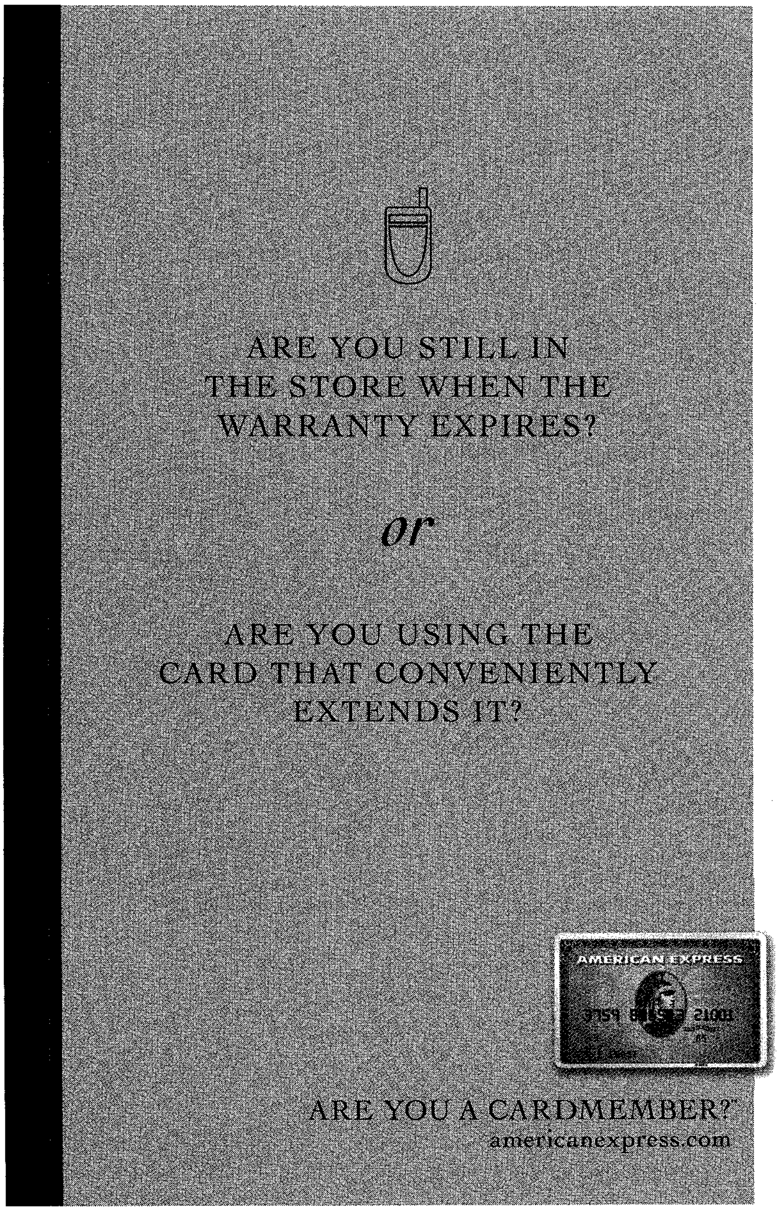
A million or two years ago, *Homo habilis* (Latin for "handyman") used one piece of flint to sharpen another piece of flint, thus inventing a new realm of gift possibilities called tools. And that is where HomeFront Hardware fits in (202 East 29th Street). This five-story emporium is chockablock with everything a man needs to fix, or break, anything in the house. For instance, a drill. Don't even think about anything but cordless—you know how guys are about being tied down. The best drills, according to Craig Döring, are made by Dewalt. The eighteen-volt, $199 model is mighty enough to build a boat should your fellow care to do that in the studio apartment the two of you share. If the project is less grand, the $76 Skil has enough torque settings to satisfy most torsional needs. When you—well, maybe not you, and certainly not I—think of a high-speed rotary instrument with a depressingly numerous assortment of bits and disk attachments, doesn't the incredible Dremel come to mind (Model 395; $77.99)? Every he-man must have a Saws-All, too. The Black and Decker reciprocating saw is sufficient to turn a compact car into a pile of metal not much bigger than its glove compartment ($89). "Oh, vise grips!" Craig cried out as we turned a corner and beheld shelves full of gleaming metal. "Every day, we all thank the farmer who invented them," he said of these locking pliers ($13.99). HomeFront is open around the clock, and it



PAULA SANZ CABALLERO

would make the perfect post-dessert romantic outing for at least one of the parties involved.

O.K., the time to heal and to caulk is over. Now it's the time to kill. At Holland & Holland (10 East 40th Street, Suite 1910), an English gunmaking firm established in 1835, there is much more to the pursuit of prey than bespoke firearms (approximately $65,000 to $200,000 and up; and, for that price, shouldn't it come with the game already dead?). This is the place to gather things for the hunter. There is, for instance, the khaki flax columnar case that holds eight itty-bitty nesting metal whiskey cups, each with a different number engraved on the bottom so that after the traditional pre-hunt drink everyone in the shooting party knows his location assignment in the field ($340). There are also nifty headphones engineered to cancel sound as soon as the decibel level hits a certain BANG!!! Noises less loud are amplified, so don't worry about not hearing Dick Cheney when he sneaks up on you ($230).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A man likes to drive fast, particularly if he has nowhere to go. And, if you have $1,616,780 to spend, he'd really appreciate a Bugatti Veyron 16.4 (satellite radio included). But he probably already has one of those. So how about a voucher for a tank of gasoline at the service station of his choice? (At top speed, the Bugatti burns a full tank nearly every fifteen minutes.) Or a gift certificate for a wash and wax at the Westside Highway Car Wash (638 West 47th Street; $11.50-$26.75)? And he'd surely love a spot in the three-hour Introduction to Racing class at the Skip Barber Racing School, during which he can master high-speed lapping or, at least, backing out of the driveway (800-221-1131, several locations around the country; $595).

Call me Ishmael's personal shopper. And what a cushy job it is, because there's only one place in town that trades in the seriously nautical—West Marine (12 West 37th Street). The perfect gift for seafarers is a VHF radio, or so I was advised by a customer who owns several, because, apparently, you can't have too many ship-to-shore handheld communication devices. Choose one that floats, since everything on a boat eventually lands in the water (ICOM M34 Floating Handheld VHF; $169.99). If your mariner is housebound on the eighth floor this winter, growing grim about the mouth, crazy to go to sea, you can make him smile by surprising him with a British admiralty chart ($58) or a yachting map of the Caribbean ($32) from New York Nautical (158 Duane Street).

What is it about some men and the weather—even some whose Town Cars have never been bounced around by a typhoon? I suppose the weather forecast is more exciting than the time forecast, but barely. Nevertheless, if your beloved TiVos the local news when he leaves town because he's afraid of missing out on the daily progression of the cold front over Staten Island, then he is a person who might enjoy Jack Williams's "The Weather Book," about which WeatherShop.com says, "If you only buy one book about weather in your lifetime, buy this one!" ($15.61). If, however, you buy no books about weather but still care about meteorology, and you buy only one lightning detector, may I suggest the StrikeAlert Personal Lightning Detector, a widget that detects approaching lightning strikes forty miles away? It's $69, or, if you buy two, $67.50 each. Since lightning is said never to strike twice, I think one is enough.

You know who ought to be jittery about high-voltage bolts of electricity? Someone who is holding, say, a graphite rod connected to a piece of wire connected to an ocean. But surely every angler knows that there are days when he and his hip waders (L. L. Bean; $59-$699.95) should stay inside and play the Bass Fishing Lakes edition of Monopoly (Amazon.com; $29.95). Meanwhile, you and I can dash over to Orvis (522 Fifth Avenue, at 44th), the oldest catalogue company in this country, and purveyors of a range of sporting apparel that would especially please the man who likes to promenade along the avenues dressed as if he were hiking the Himalayas. The waterproof equestrian-style Barbour jacket with corduroy collar ($345) is hardy indeed, but, should the Great Sandstorms of Riverside Drive erode the coat's finish, Barbour will gladly slather on more wax for $27. For the outdoorsy-looking man who actually likes the outdoors, the company offers a range of thrilling vacations, such as fly-fishing in Patagonia (one week, $3,550). He'll need wiggle rigs, of course—plastic flies that look like live insects writhing in pain on the hook (six rigs and twenty SpecTastics, $5.95 plus shipping, at ezknot.com/wigglekit.html). For rods and such, head over to Capitol Fishing (132 West 36th Street), where I overheard a customer say of the Lamiglas Ron Arra Surf Pro, "Man, this is the stick that all the guys want" ($299).

It is well documented that no man will admit to being lost, but perhaps when it comes to celestially navigating the universe an open-minded know-it-all might stoop to ask for directions. For those enlightened few, there is the Meade mySKY, a handheld gizmo that allows the user to point to an object in the night sky and receive an audiovisual description of it from a built-in database of more than thirty thousand planets, stars, galaxies, nebulae, and other cosmic tourist attractions (B & H Photo, 420 Ninth Avenue, at 34th, or Amazon.com; $399). And, as he looks up and gazes at the heavens, he will likely wonder, Could all this be mine someday?

Yes, some of it could. Lunar Federation, Inc.—"Earth's Official Lunar & Mars Real Estate Agency"—sells one-acre plots of land on the moon and on Mars, which it claims are up for grabs, thanks to a loophole in the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 (LunarFederation.com; $29.99-$99.99). He may be just your average man on the moon, but on earth he can be a laird. Specifically, he can be the Laird of Kincavel and reign supreme over his square foot of the Kincavel estate, in Scotland. The title (available in Lady, too) comes with a certificate of ownership, a map, and the book "A Little History of Scotland" (Experiencedays.com; £29).

Males have probably always enjoyed watching the defeat of other males, but without the invention of numerals and the subsequent invention of the concept of keeping score we could never have had a million sports channels. If your male is in want of diversion, treat him to a TV subscription so that he can watch out-of-market games twenty-four hours a day in whatever league provokes him to yell at his flat screen (contact your satellite or cable provider; under $200 per season). After toiling so many hours in front of the television, he'll need a mas-

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sage, and, honestly, nobody or nothing kneads better than the OSIM iSqueez foot-and-calf massager (Brookstone, 20 West 57th Street; $399).

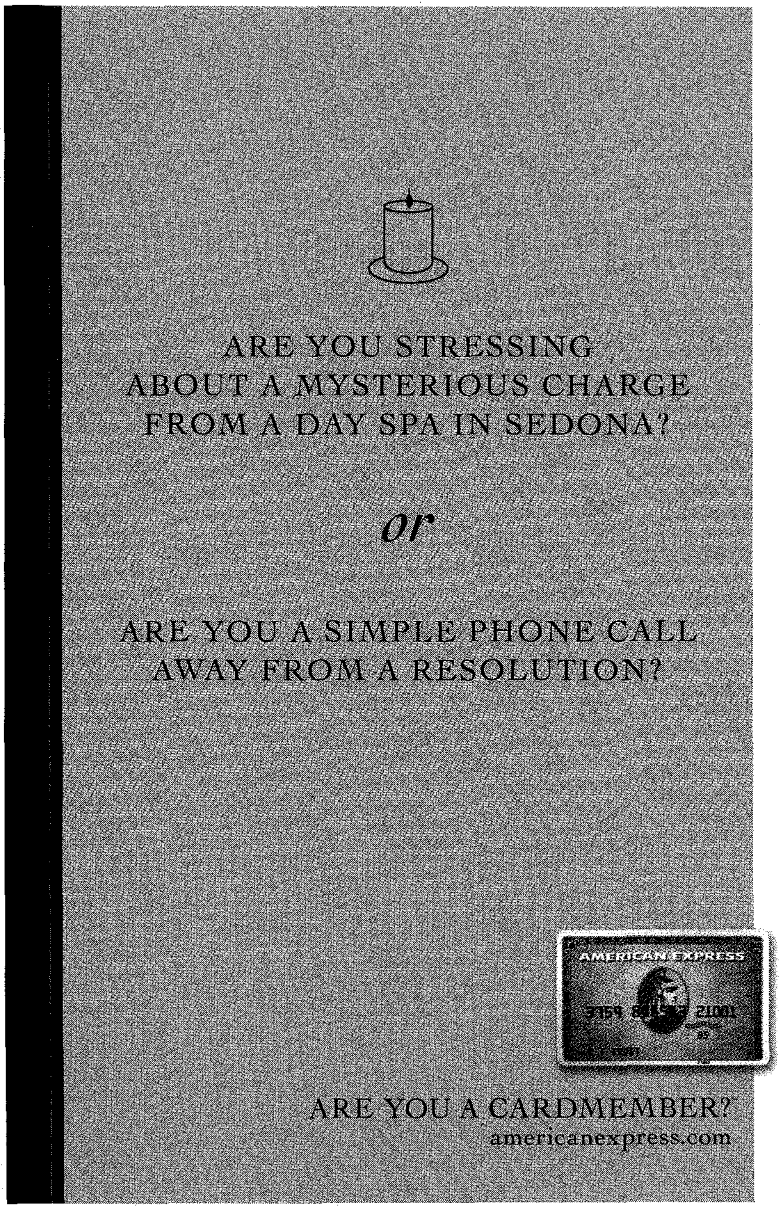
For sports fans, Wall Streeters, Fred Thompson supporters, and others seeking an alternative to reality, there are plenty of illusions and delusions at Fantasma Magic (421 Seventh Avenue, at 34th, second floor). There is also David Roth, world-renowned magician and nice guy, who will help you select the perfect trick to give someone—who will then perform it for you so many times that you will wish you could make yourself disappear. There is the beautifully handcrafted Dutch Sandwich ($79.99), Aladdin's Handkerchief ($16.99), and the Perfect Bend Fork ($34.99). The large, handmade levitation automata is truly a sensation ($9,000).

Remember the gifts of yore? Ties and CDs and pens and books about the Founding Fathers? Well, ties are on the endangered-attire list, CDs are, like, so pre-iPod, and is there a father-in-law alive who doesn't know how to one-click on Amazon for the latest Doris Kearns Goodwin, delivery guaranteed by Christmas? Some standbys have changed with the times, of course. Take the Wacom Bamboo tablet, a contraption that allows you to enter pictures into your computer by drawing them on an electronic writing pad (Wacom.com; $79).

Men still wear cologne, but I wish they wouldn't. No matter what you may believe, all men's fragrances smell like the air freshener in a taxi. It is, therefore, not a suitable gift for anyone, except possibly a cabbie. Scent-free shaving products are a different story. A depilation fetishist who is on the road a lot might find some room in his carry-on for The Art of Shaving kit, with unscented pre-shave oil, shaving cream, after-shave balm, and badger brush (theartofshaving.com; $100). At Freemans Sporting Club (8 Rivington Street), which looks like a Maine lodge from an era that never quite existed, a swell can have his whiskers shorn in the back-room barbershop/apothecary ($65 for a shave and a haircut; no appointment necessary), or you could arrange for him to take an hour-long class in the craft of the straight razor ($60; gift certificates available). While he learns how to strop, why don't you get him that handcrafted Brooks bicycle seat he's desperate for? You'll find some in the adjoining sutlery, which, of course, is an outpost supplying provisions to soldiers and explorers ($100-$400).

The way to a man's heart, it has been said (but not by a cardiologist), is through his stomach. Why not sign your glutton up for a Saturday class at the Culinary Institute of America and never think about cooking again (ciachef.edu; $325)? But why stop at sautéing? Unless he's already perfect, there are some roads out there that lead to betterment. Shouldn't he learn how to Photoshop his paunch away at the International Center for Photography (ICP.org; $120-$795)? Can't he find a slot in his calendar for an improv class at the Upright Citizens Brigade (ucbtheatre.com/classes; $325)? Need money? Mike Scelza and Johnny Marinacci have turned Matt Damon, Edward Norton, and Robert Duvall from losers into winners—in poker, that is (347-200-8531; $200 an hour).

What does the scholar carry his pencils and erasers in? There are plenty of manly carryalls around town. I liked ev-



Not all disputes are resolved in the Cardmember's favor. Terms, conditions and restrictions apply.

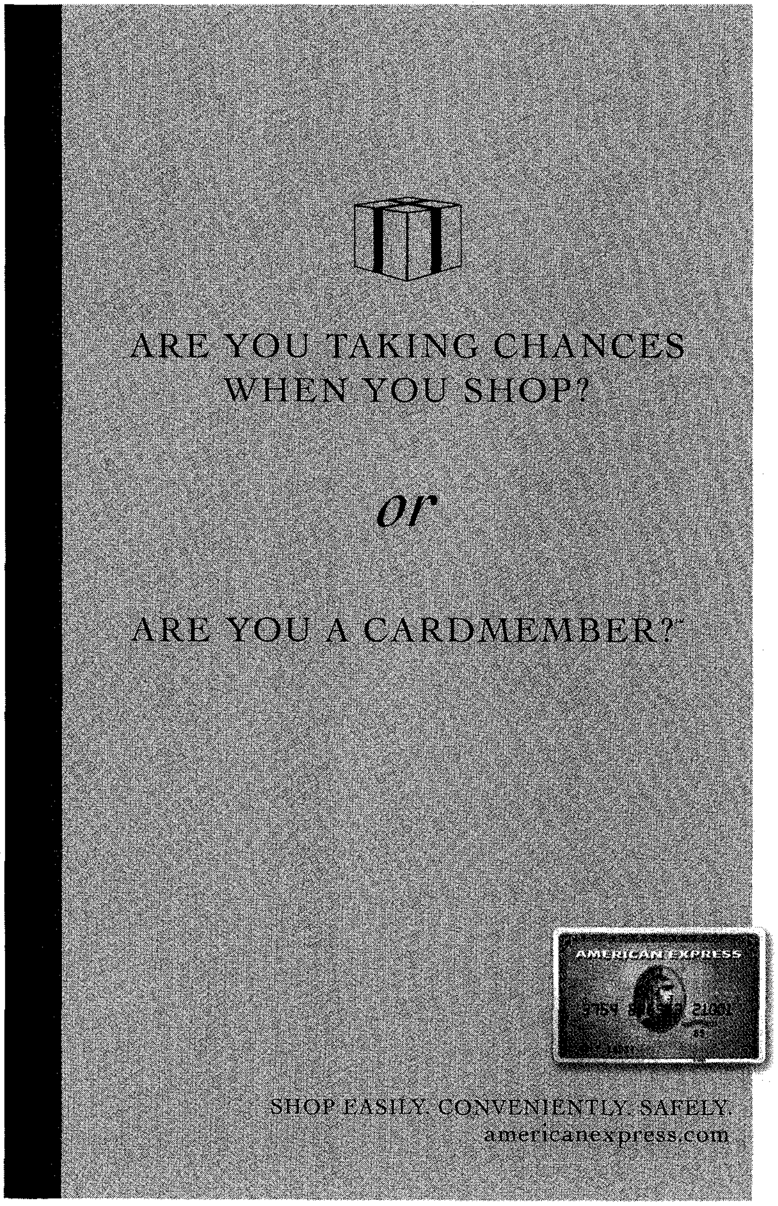
erything on the shelf at Takashimaya (693 Fifth Avenue, at 54th), but my favorites were the lightweight distressed-leather computer bag, in purple or oatmeal, designed by Moss ($545) and the Bill Amber briefcase in perforated leather—I prefer the tawny brown, but an attractive man nearby grabbed a black one, so maybe that is the color of choice ($895). Dunhill (711 Fifth Avenue, at 56th) has a smallish North South (i.e., vertically shaped) shoulder bag with an outside zipper, in brushed canvas with leather trim, in midnight blue, tobacco, and forest green ($445); and an iPod case (available online; $105) in a deep-brown nubby canvas or black leather, both designed with the Dunhill "d-8" logo, which doesn't look logo-y at all. The formerly staid Brooks Brothers (346 Madison Avenue, at 44th) has an impressive array of non-staid totes: a navy pinstriped duffel with silvertone hardware ($528), a weekend bag in brown wool herringbone ($398), and a crocodile flap briefcase ($10,000). You—I mean, he—definitely need the jaunty Filson briefcase/computer bag that comes in tan or otter-green rugged cotton at Camouflage (141 Eighth Avenue, at 17th; $250-$290). What about smaller, everyday bags? "We do not have murses"—meaning male purses, for anyone who does not speak metrosexual—a salesman named Tony told me. "This boutique is just for big strong men."

That may be true, but if I were a little weak man I'd shop here anyway. I'd buy the extravagantly long baby-alpaca-and-wool French Lieutenant's Woman-style hooded scarf in squares of gray, black, and plaid ($210) and the Robert Geller black leather gloves that can be worn two ways. "Let me throw this notion out," a salesman named Eric said. "You can wear the gloves butch, like this, or with the knitted sleeve folded over tight to keep you warm." And then I'd march uptown to Ralph Lauren (867 Madison Avenue, at 71st) and bring home a few cashmere sweaters ($397-$895) and a white waffle-terry robe to make me feel that my home is a hotel ($93.75). If I travelled a lot, I'd stock up on the wrinkle-free shirts at Brooks Brothers ($79.50; three for $199). If I were the type, I'd sport a custom-made jade-green beaver stingy brim from Ellen Christine (255 West 18th Street), a milliner who explained to me why women love buying gifts for guys at her shop: "It's a way of getting a hat into the family without making a commitment."

Oh, but go ahead—make the commitment for him. Enroll him in Puzzlers, the Elms Hand-Cut Puzzle Rental Club, and count on his sitting at the card table downstairs for a long time, assembling a wooden facsimile of, say, an intricate folk-art scene or a classic *New Yorker* cover (info@elmspuzzles.com; $75 for a lifetime membership plus the first two-hundred-and-ninety-nine-piece puzzle). Aaggh. Right before the nervous breakdown—his or yours—divert him with a membership at Film Forum at the $110 level, which allows him to bring a guest (209 West Houston, near Sixth Avenue).

And what does he wear to a retrospective of the films of Ousmane Sembene, Africa's foremost moviemaker (November 30-December 13)? Perhaps I should get him the Issey Miyake black asymmetrical jersey dress with a ruched red star, coincidentally in my size (Issey Miyake, 802 Madison Avenue, at 67th; $495).

—*Patricia Marx*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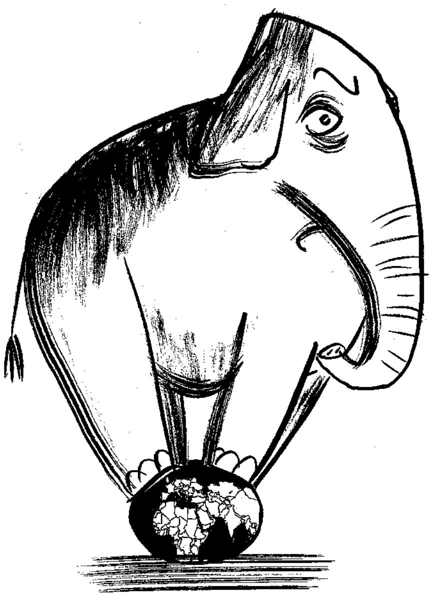
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
FIGHTING WORDS

Earlier this month at the National Press Club, in Washington, two expert September 11th political opportunists joined in an embrace, when Pat Robertson, the televangelist who attributed the terrorist attacks to American sinfulness, endorsed Rudy Giuliani, the Republican Presidential front-runner whose every campaign sentence, according to Senator Joseph Biden, consists of "a noun and a verb and 9/11." Robertson explained his support for the pro-choice, pro-gay-rights candidate by stating, "The overriding issue before the American people is the defense of our population from the bloodlust of Islamic terrorists"—bringing to mind no one so much as the foreign-policy commentator Borat, who told a rodeo audience in Virginia, "May George Bush drink the blood of every single man, woman, and child of Iraq."

As the tide goes out on President Bush's foreign policy, the mass of flotsam left behind includes a Republican Party that no longer knows how to be reasonable. Whenever its leading Presidential candidates appear before partisan audiences, they try to outdo one another in pledging loyalty oaths to the use of force, pandering to the war lobby as if they were Democrats addressing the teachers' union. Giuliani has surrounded himself with a group of advisers—from Norman Podhoretz to the former Pentagon official Michael Rubin—who, having got Iraq spectacularly wrong, seem determined to make up for it by doing the same thing in Iran. Giuliani approaches foreign policy in the same mood of barely restrained eagerness for confrontation with which, as mayor of New York, he went after criminals. He has essentially promised to go to war with Iran in order to prevent it from acquiring nuclear weapons, and he recently suggested that waterboarding is only torture when the wrong people are doing it, and blamed the "liberal media" for giving it a bad name. He has said that he would improve America's miserable image around the world by threatening State Department diplomats with unnamed consequences unless they defend United States foreign policy more aggressively. "The era of cost-free anti-Americanism must end," Giuliani snarled in the polite pages of *Foreign Affairs*, which had invited candidates to lay out their views.



Mitt Romney, perhaps sensing that his military bona fides might be in question, has declared his readiness to out-Cheney Dick Cheney and "double Guantánamo." In an ad, he strolls across the lawn of a large suburban home, like a financial adviser in a Charles Schwab commercial, and intones, "It's this century's nightmare—jihadism. Violent, radical Islamic fundamentalism. Their goal is to unite the world under a single jihadist caliphate. To do that, they must collapse freedom-loving nations, like us." John McCain, who does not believe that the definition of torture depends on who's doing it, has staked his campaign on a long-term victory in Iraq through the strategy of the surge, which is destined to end around the time the parties gather to nominate their candidates, next summer. For Fred Thompson foreign policy is mostly immigration policy—he just wants the borders patrolled with heavy force.

In 1968, when the Democrats tried to hold on to the White House during a disastrous war, the Party self-destructed at the Chicago Convention. But in 2008, in Minneapolis, the Republicans will nominate a candidate on a promise of

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

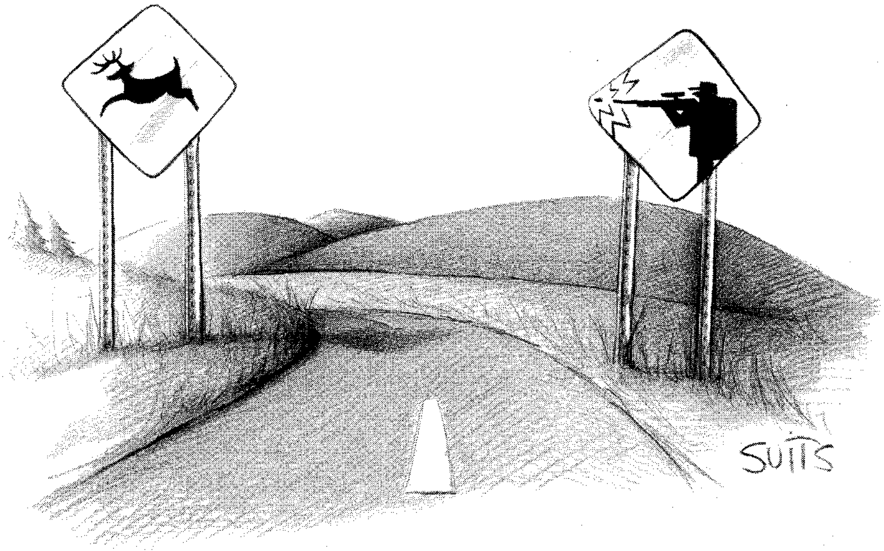
four more years of the same. The one piece of Bush's foreign policy that the leading Republicans haven't taken up (again, with the occasional exception of McCain) is his "freedom agenda." In this, they are probably responding to the true feelings of the Party's base, for which the war on terror is more about nationalism, Christianity, and raw fear than about idealistic blandishments of democracy promotion.

Conservative foreign policy has always had a strong streak of isolationism that only direct threats can vanquish. Without the Cold War, Robert Taft's world view would have dominated the Party; without September 11th, Pat Buchanan's might have done the same. In this election, the isolationist candidate is the Texas congressman Ron Paul. He frequently attacks the core rationale of Bush's foreign policy, and receives enthusiastic applause for doing so, which indicates that Republican views about the war in Iraq might be more heterodox than the leading candidates and their strategists assume. But his brand of anti-interventionism reduces the Republican debate to hawks versus cranks. "They attack us because we've been over there. We've been bombing Iraq for ten years," Paul said at a debate in South Carolina. "I'm suggesting that we listen to the people who attacked us and the reason they did it."

The room for genuine discussion in the Republican field is so limited that after Romney implied during a debate last month in Dearborn, Michigan, that war with Iran would need a legal basis and might require congressional approval Giuliani spent the next week ridiculing him, and the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page reacted as if John Kerry had just mentioned a "global test": "Egad. Call in the attorneys? Perhaps it is Mr. Romney's experience in business that taught him to want lawyers at his elbow, given that no CEO can survive without them these days. Or perhaps it is our hyper-legalized politics." You can be sure that Romney (who immediately afterward released his jihad-in-the-burbs ad) won't make the mistake of worrying aloud about the Constitution or the legality of war again anytime soon.

But Romney's gaffe betrays the Republican campaign's dirty secret: some of the candidates have responsible views and serious proposals. Romney, in the *Foreign Affairs* series, admitted that "the American people—and many others around the world—have increasing doubts about the United States' direction and role in the world," and he rejected ideological dogma in favor of the kind of mild Republican internationalism last seen during the Presidency of Bush's father. McCain's statement in *Foreign Affairs* went on at length about a "League of Democracies" that "would not supplant the U.N. or other international organizations but complement them by harnessing the political and moral advantages offered by united democratic action"—an idea advanced by some liberal supporters of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. Off camera and in private, a few of the Republicans seem to understand that Bush has driven the country into a ditch. But, because the thirty per cent of Americans who remain die-hard Bush supporters have a death grip on their party, those candidates won't say so, choosing to repress their constructive impulses and sound as shallow and jingoistic as possible while campaigning. Perhaps they're counting on changing course and governing differently once elected. It would be dangerous to assume that they can pull it off—we've been there before.

—*George Packer*



THE BOARDS UNDER THE SEA

The other evening, Francesca Zambello, the opera director, was waiting in a restaurant on Forty-sixth Street. Zambello, who is best known for psychologically probing interpretations of the operatic repertoire—her dark, interior "Don Giovanni" was just revived to great acclaim in London—will make her Broadway début in December with "The Little Mermaid," an adaptation of the Disney movie. Joining her was Thomas Schumacher, the producer of Disney Theatricals. It was Schumacher who persuaded another experimental director, Julie Taymor, to create a stage version of "The Lion King," which just celebrated its tenth anniversary on Broadway and has grossed more than three billion dollars worldwide.

Zambello ordered the lobster roll, Schumacher the fish tacos. In a little over an hour, the curtain would go up on the show's third preview. "I had given up on the idea of 'Little Mermaid,'" Schumacher said. "Now I love this property. But I couldn't figure out how to do it." Some years ago, Schumacher had commissioned Matthew Bourne to adapt "The Little Mermaid," but the project foundered. (Bourne went on to co-choreograph "Mary Poppins" for Disney and Cameron Mackintosh.) "Francesca called, and she said, 'I have an approach,'" Schumacher continued. "And we had a very quiet dinner

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in my apartment here in New York, and it took me about an hour to say yes."

"We ate sushi, which was appropriate," Zambello said. "Devouring the product."

"People who work in opera have absolutely no problem with the absurd," Schumacher said. "If you come from a world that deals with myth, legend, and lore, you say, 'O.K., we'll do underwater.' Everyone else is like, 'How the hell would you do underwater?' "

"It's about creating a parallel universe," said Zambello, whose mermaids speed about a blue-lit stage on Heelys, iridescent tails trailing behind them. "The 'Ring' cycle is not any different from 'The Little Mermaid' in that way." She said that prior to working with Schumacher she had been more familiar with Hans Christian Andersen's literary mermaid than with Disney's version. (For the chance to live as a human, Andersen's mermaid submits to having her tongue cut out, and agrees to trade her tail for legs that make her feel as if she were walking on knives; she is turned into sea foam when the prince she loves marries someone else. In the Disney movie, the mermaid, Ariel, not only has a fine pair of pain-free gams but also lands the guy and gets her voice back.) "Of course, Andersen has a sad ending," Zambello said. "We don't. We have worked very hard to create a positive ending for her."

"It's more about 'Do I feel I was born to live here?' " Schumacher said. " 'Is this the experience that I want?' "

"It's a girl's version of 'Faust,' " said Zambello, who nonetheless admitted that she'd always liked the walking-on-knives thing.

"You must also like the ending of 'Cinderella' better when the sisters get their eyes pecked out," Schumacher said. "We all do. When they chop their feet off to fit in the shoe!"

In Zambello's revision of Disney's revision, the mermaid ascends to the surface of the sea on a wire, her tail unfurling to reveal shapely legs. "There is so much metaphor in that," Zambello said. "It is like a rite of passage, her first menstrual cycle. Is that part of a Broadway musical? Maybe subliminally."

Schumacher said that he hoped the wish-fulfillment element of the story would give it broad appeal. "Our job is not to put misery on the stage," he said. "Our job is not to make it uninteresting, so that it is interesting to the two per cent of the population that likes the uninteresting. Robert Patrick wrote a play called 'Kennedy's Children,' and there's an Off Broadway actor in it, and someone says to him, 'What are you doing now?' and he says something like 'Oh, one of those shows where they make the audience crawl in on their knees and hit them in the face with a bag of shit.' That is not our job."

When asked, Zambello acknowledged that it was possible to interpret the Little Mermaid's flight from the confines of the sea as a gay theme, although she said that it hadn't been part of her concept of the story. "But show me anybody in the world who hasn't wanted to be someone else," she added. "That's a universal theme."

Francesca Zambello

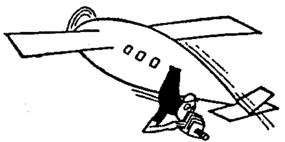
"The reality is there are two minorities on the planet that are born *into* families: disabled people and gay people," Schumacher said. "Every other minority is born *of* a family. The idea of being an outsider within the walls of your own house is a unique thing, and that really is inside this play. That Ariel is an outsider in her own family connects with lots of places."

"Everybody sees themselves as an outsider," Zambello said. "Though I will say that mermaids have no genitalia. That's something you don't really think about until you work on mermaids, and then you think about it a lot."

—Rebecca Mead

OVER THERE

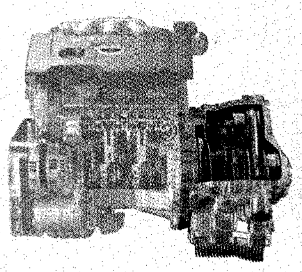
NEW JOB



The other day, Ralph Dayton was standing in the middle of his living room in East Hampton, in jeans and hiking boots, packing for Anbar Province, in Iraq. For the next month, he will be embedded with the Marines as a photographer for the East Hampton *Star*. He's paying for the trip himself; he will use a laptop and a portable satellite transmitter to send, from the desert, images of the war to a paper whose front page recently bore the headlines "FAKE COP WASN'T FUNNY" and "OFFICIALS MUST RETHINK THE ICE RINK." He may write dispatches, too—"I'm taking it one step at a time," he said. As of that morning, he'd never published a photograph.

Dayton, who is forty-three, is tall and bald, with watery blue eyes. He is named for another Ralph Dayton, a shoemaker born in 1588, in Kent, England. (Many Dayton descendants live in the area.) He attended East Hampton High School. His father was a lawyer, his grandfather a farmer. "Growing up here was pretty special," he said. "Not like it is today. There was none of this materialism. When I was fourteen, I got a job as a beachboy, sweeping out cabanas." He went to law school, and tried practicing law but hated it, so, like many of his townie ancestors, he bought a place in Sagaponack and grew vegetables. The eventual bounty was real estate: he sold the farm and used the income to buy land in the North Carolina blacklands, where he planted cotton, among other things, and was happy.

Dayton's interest in the military began, he explained, during the early days of the Iraq war, when he met an off-duty Navy Black Hawk pilot during a surfing trip in Costa Rica. The pilot was part of a squadron that inserted and extracted Navy SEALs from Iraq. "I told him where my farm was, and he said, 'We fly over that area all the time. Give me the coördinates.' " A few days later,



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Dayton says, a group of helicopters landed on his farm; from then on, about once a week, he let them practice their touch-and-go drills there. (During a nighttime exercise, he once pretended to be a "partisan," a U.S.-friendly farmer in a country where a helicopter has been shot down.)

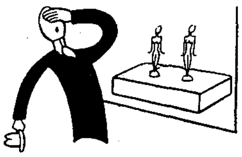
Two years ago, Dayton decided to get out of farming and become a war photographer. He returned to East Hampton, where he tried to build a portfolio: pictures of surfing, potato harvests, a few trips to Latin America. He took a training course called "Surviving Hostile Regions." But, he found, becoming embedded is "kind of a Catch-22": you need media affiliation, and to get that you need experience. The *Times* didn't return his e-mails. Eventually, he made his pitch to the *Star*. "I said, 'Look, I'm willing to finance this myself. Basically, all I'm asking you to do is believe in me.' "

In Iraq, Dayton will follow a local story: Conlon Carabine, a thirty-three-year-old Marine major from East Hampton (angle: the Carabine family's campaign, back home, to buy things like pencils and soccer balls for Iraqi children). Dayton has been exchanging e-mails with Carabine, whose name he found through the local Catholic church's prayer list, which, he discovered, included fifteen or twenty names that he recognized. "I was surprised. I thought I'd be lucky to come up with one local guy," he said. "In other areas, like rural America, communities embrace people who are serving. The whole town is pulling for them. But we live in this affluent area. Everybody here's so caught up in things that maybe the people overseas are sort of forgotten."

Dayton did one last run-through of his luggage: goggles, helmet, brown flak jacket in a bumpy model called Dragon Skin. Camera equipment—computer, satellite transmitter, battery packs—two long-sleeved shirts, extra pants: all told, about thirty thousand dollars' worth of gear, including a plane ticket on Kuwait Airways. A military escort was planning to meet Dayton in Kuwait; from there, he'd catch the flights that would take him to his unit.

—*Lizzie Widdicombe*

AT THE GALLERIES
NAUGHTY OR NICE



"Business art is the step that comes after Art," saith Warhol the Prophet, and, thirty years later, we know whereof he spake. The mergers of art and commerce accumulate on every side, as brand-name artists such as Damien Hirst, Richard Prince, and Takashi Murakami endorse and/or provide luxury items for Louis Vuitton, Fendi, and other purveyors. One such venture kicked off last week in the West Village, where Paul McCarthy, a California-based artist known for his reliably disturbing installations, has converted the Maccarone gallery into a chocolate factory. Peter Paul Chocolates LLC, as he calls the enterprise, will operate through the end of 2007, turning out Santa Claus figurines for the Christmas trade.

Made of premium chocolate from the Guittard company, in California, the ten-inch-high figurines sell for a hundred dollars each, and McCarthy, a sixty-two-year-old man whose scraggly white mustache and beard might remind you of Santa unless you were familiar with his work, hasn't the slightest idea how many of them he will sell. "The price is a dilemma," he said a few days before the opening. "The people who don't know it's art ain't going to buy it, and the people who buy it as art will have the dilemma over whether to eat it or not. We make a thousand a day. If we actually sold a thousand a day, or eight hundred, that would be quite astounding. I'd probably have to rethink"—he laughed—"the world of marketing!"

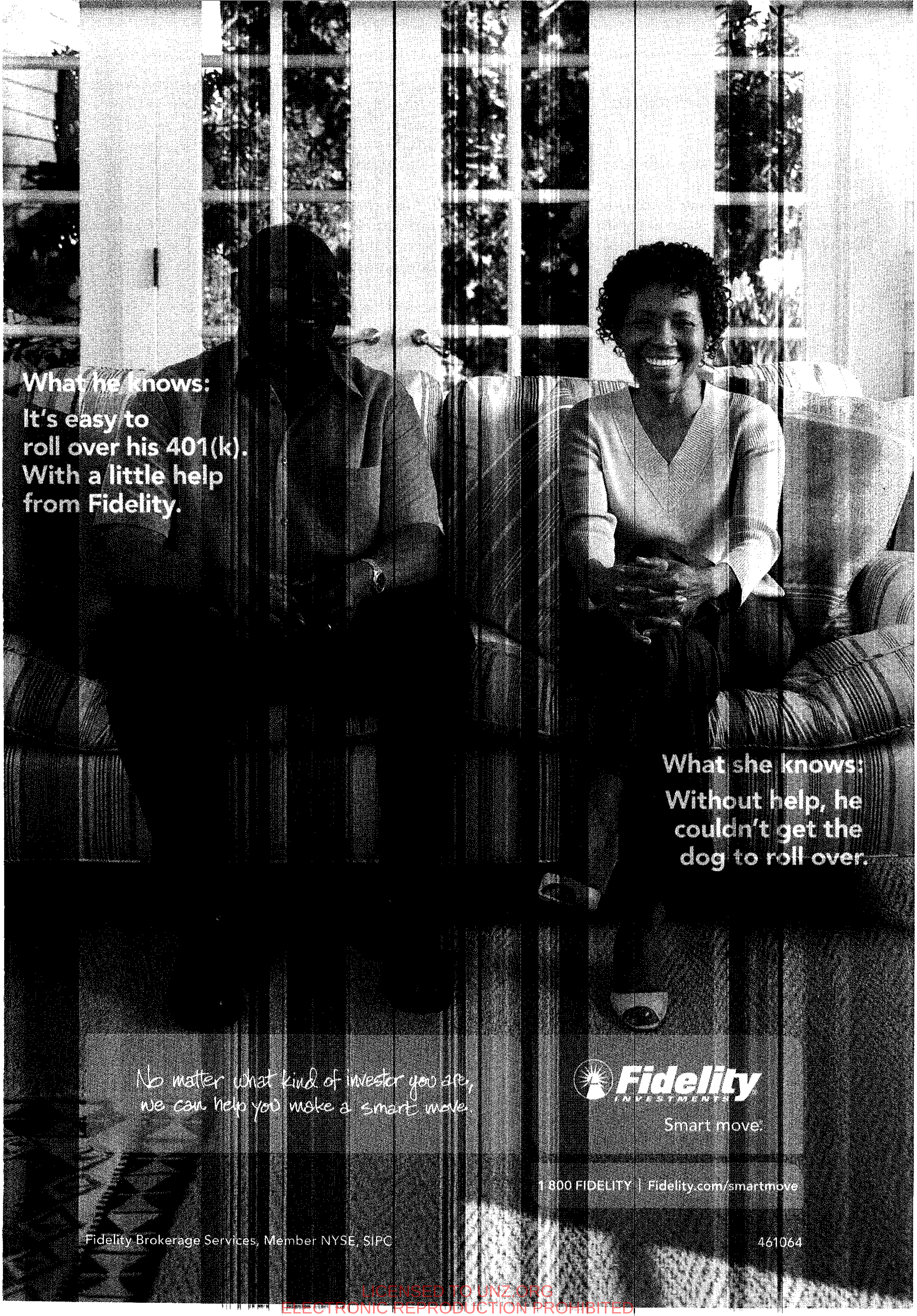
The conversion from gallery to factory involved a complete renovation of the Maccarone's six-thousand-square-foot space on Greenwich Street. The manufacturing takes place in a large room to the right of the entrance, under the supervision of Peter P. Greweling, a master chocolatier with the Culinary Institute of America; visitors can watch through a glass wall as the raw chocolate is heated in a stainless-steel vat, cooled slightly, then warmed, poured into molds that are then attached to a spinning machine, cooled and taken out of the molds, and sent via conveyor belt to an area in back to be packaged and stored. "We built to code," Michele Maccarone, the gallery's owner, said. "The public can't be near the food preparation." The packaged figurines are sold out front, in a McCarthy-designed retail store with mirrored walls and custom wallpaper showing multiple images of the Santa figurine.

The Santa figurine, whose title is "Santa with Tree and Bell," is innocuous enough at first glance. We see the large, friendly bell, held in front of him, and the Christmas tree, hoisted on his right shoulder—or is it a Christmas tree? It's treelike, in an abstract sort of way. But one is also aware that, a few years back, McCarthy created a twenty-five-foot-high bronze for the city of Rotterdam that he called "Santa with Butt Plug." Sexual imagery, not always benign, has figured in a good deal of his work. (His 1992 sculptural installation "The Garden" cast an entirely new light on tree-hugging.) "I've made a number of pieces about the butt plug," he conceded. "I like that it looks like a Christmas tree, and also like a Brancusi, or an Arp. As an artist, you look for things that have multiple meanings." The same holds true for the name of his company. Peter Paul Chocolates LLC, he said, refers to the now defunct candy bar called Peter Paul Mounds, and also to the fact that his chocolatier's first name is Peter. Apparently, he was not thinking about Peter Paul Rubens.

"Turning a gallery into a shop—there's something I like about that," he said. "But is it a chocolate company or a sculpture? Is it people doing a job or is it a performance, which you watch through a window? I view the whole thing as sculpture. And as a sculpture its success or failure is not based on how many figurines you sell. If anything, its failure might be more interesting, or more relevant, than its success."

What if someone—a rich collector, say—wanted to buy the whole installation? "Well," he said, removing a billed cap to massage his mostly bald pate, "the piece is not something that ends. It's meant to be an operating factory, so somebody who buys it would have to operate it." And what sort of price would that somebody have to come up with? "I don't know," McCarthy said. "But we could"—laughter again—"we could cut 'em a deal."

—*Calvin Tomkins*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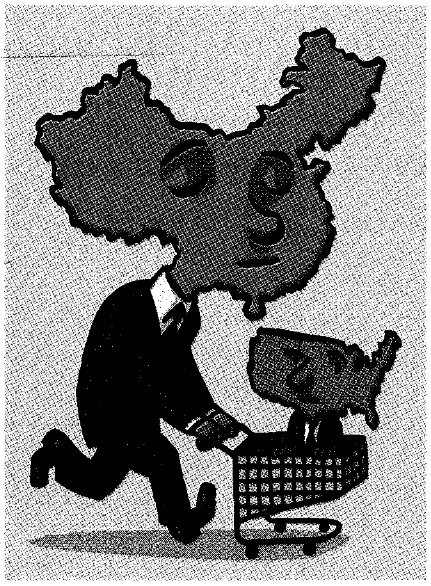
THE FINANCIAL PAGE
SOVEREIGN WEALTH WORLD

Between corrupt mortgage brokers, feckless lenders, and risk-happy hedge funds, there's plenty to keep investors and policymakers up at night. But recently a new item has appeared on the list of things to worry about: so-called sovereign wealth funds, which are investment funds controlled by foreign governments. While these funds are not new—they first rose to prominence in the seventies, as a way for Arab states to reinvest their oil money—of late they've become major players in global markets, thanks to the precipitous rise in oil prices and the booming Chinese economy. China's new sovereign fund alone has two hundred billion dollars to invest, while sovereign wealth funds all together control more than two and a half trillion dollars—and could control as much as twelve trillion by 2015. These funds now have the buying power to shape market prices and acquire assets throughout the developed world. Were China's fund so inclined, it could buy Ford, G.M., Volkswagen, and Honda, and still have a little money left over for ice cream.

Not surprisingly, Western politicians aren't thrilled by this prospect. The U.S. recently toughened requirements that any foreign acquisition be vetted by a commission that would assess its impact on national security. Germany has introduced legislation that would permit the government to bar, on national-security grounds, any foreign investment worth twenty-five per cent or more of a company's value. And some E.U. commissioners have suggested that stringent regulations on sovereign wealth funds may be in the offing.

What are people so anxious about? The first concern is obvious: no one wants foreign states, especially those which might be anti-Western, acquiring Western companies that have anything to do with national security or advanced technology. But policymakers also believe that having governments play an active role in the stock market and in the global economy might make the whole system less efficient and productive, since government-run companies would likely think about things other than the bottom line, including protecting the interests of their home country. This situation has put free-marketeers in a peculiar quandary. They usually favor the free flow of capital in the world's markets, but, in this case, supporting the free flow of capital would mean letting governments run American companies, which no free-market economist thinks is a good idea.



Some of the worries about the dangers posed by sovereign funds are overstated. Many of them are investing in foreign stocks because they're looking for higher investment returns, which suggests that they will act much like other investors, and focus primarily on the bottom line. And the funds are aware of the tensions their activities have already raised, and they are unlikely to exacerbate matters with aggressive acquisitions. So don't expect China to try to buy Boeing anytime soon.

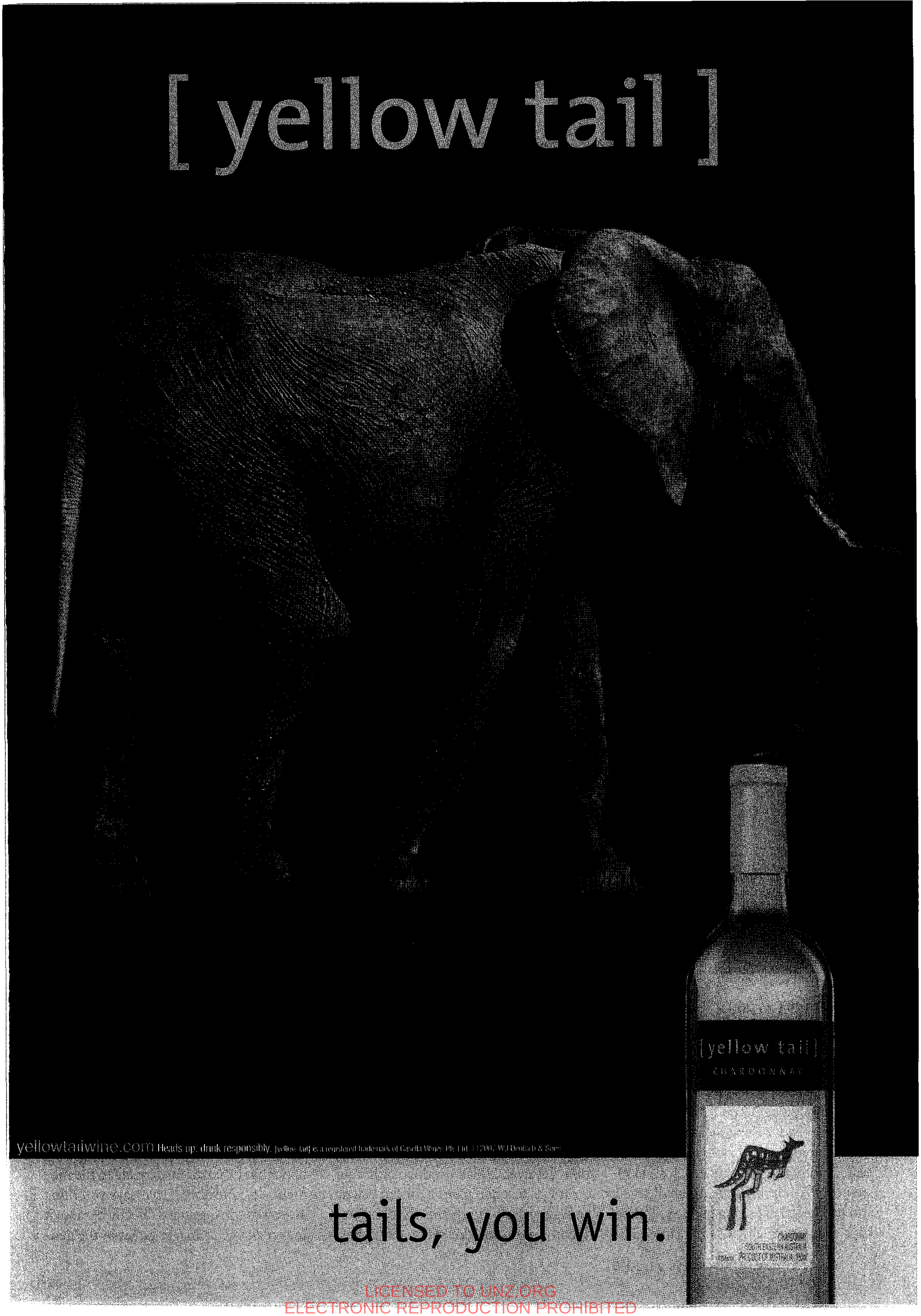
More important, even if some foreign governments did end up running companies with an eye toward their own interests, it's not obvious that that would really matter to the economy as a whole. If the China Investment Corporation, for instance, bought an American toy company and told it to sell only toys made in China, in order to save the Chinese toy industry from its recent bad publicity, the company would quickly lose customers. But its competitors would gain customers, and the system would quickly adjust. Free markets don't require that everyone try to maximize profits; they just need competition, so that if a company makes bad decisions someone else can come in and take advantage. As long as these government-owned companies face serious competition, they won't pose a real threat to anyone but their own shareholders.

That doesn't mean that national-security restrictions on sovereign wealth funds are a bad idea—no one wants China running a U.S. defense contractor. But it does mean that the global economy is robust enough so that these funds are unlikely to shake it. In fact, for all the anxiety about government-run funds corrupting the purity of the free market, the truth is that the global economy is already pretty impure. In the U.S., after all, public pension funds account for forty per cent of all institutional investment. In Europe, even now, governments own sizable stakes in a number of major corporations, while in many of the most successful Asian economies government and industry have historically worked hand in hand. Almost eighty per cent of the oil in the world is pumped by state-owned firms, and, even as China's economy continues to explode, a large percentage remains state-owned. The rise of sovereign funds will create plenty of strange situations, like having a foreign government own your local supermarket—the Qatar Investment Authority recently considered buying the British grocer Sainsbury's. But it's not as radical a shift from the current state of things as one might think. Every time you buy gas at a Citgo gas station, after all, you're doing business with the Venezuelan government, which owns the chain.

The prospect of American companies being sold to foreign states is, to be sure, disconcerting. But it's a problem of our own making. The reason that sovereign wealth funds are so flush with cash is all the dollars we spend on oil and Asian consumer goods. If we want to consume far beyond our means, then, one way or another we're going to end up selling off assets to pay for it. Passing laws barring foreign states from acquiring American companies may help treat the symptom. But it's not going to do much to cure the disease.

—*James Surowiecki*

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN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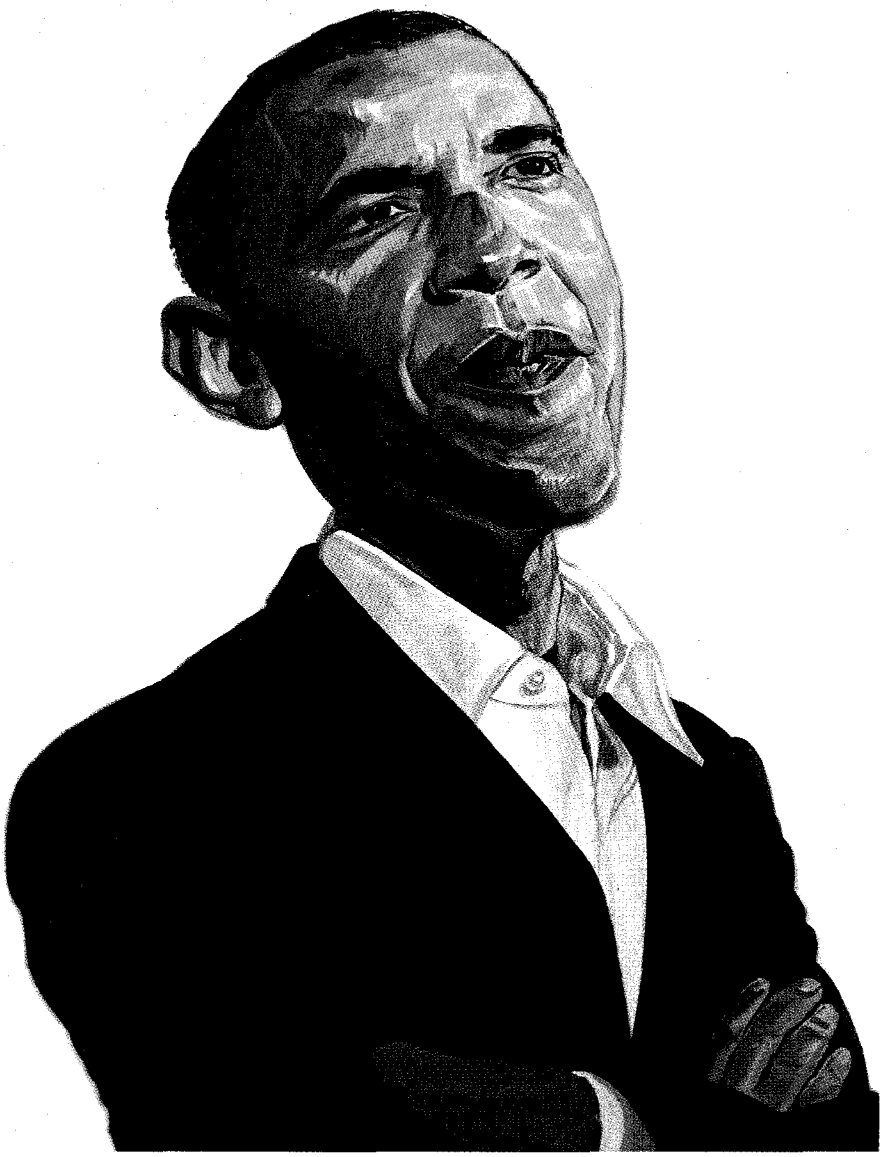
THE POLITICAL SCENE

THE RELAUNCH

Can Barack Obama catch Hillary Clinton?

BY RYAN LIZZA



PHILIP BURKE

From 1993 to 2004, Barack Obama taught at the University of Chicago Law School. According to his students, he was a gifted teacher. "If you had just a surface opinion, he would ask why you held it. He always dug deeper," Barbara Blank, a lawyer—and a Republican—practicing in Washington, D.C., told me earlier this year. Another former student, Josh Pemstein, said, "He liked being challenged, and he liked challenging us, as well." Perhaps unintentionally, Obama lapsed into his pedagogic persona during a recent visit to Agassiz Elementary School, in Ottumwa, Iowa. With seven weeks left before the Iowa caucuses—the curious ritual that this year really could set the course for the Democratic nomination and the 2008 election—Obama looked to relaunch his campaign and clarify his differences with his chief rival, Hillary Rodham Clinton.

It was teacher-parent conference day at Agassiz, and with the children away Obama, who was dressed in dark khakis and a blue shirt, had the school pretty much to himself. In one classroom, he acted as the host of a roundtable discussion on retirement policy. In the gymnasium, he gave a stump speech and took questions. After that, in another classroom, he sat for an interview, during which he tried to make the case for his candidacy. Obama began with foreign policy, but his theme was broader than any single issue; it amounted to the unembarrassed assertion that he is the only candidate willing to be wholly honest with voters.

"I think Hillary is committed to a much more conventional approach," Obama said. "I believe that we face unconventional threats, and that is going to require a level of personal Presidential diplomacy that can repair the damage that's been done by George Bush. I think that means the President being involved in talking directly to our enemies, and not just our friends, and being less worried about the conventions of, you know, who we meet with, and what level envoys are sent, and so forth.

"I think we have a very real difference on Iraq," he went on, citing Clinton's public statements and her support of the Senate resolution, co-sponsored by Joe Lieberman and Jon Kyl, which was intended to warn Iran about meddling in Iraq. "She believes that our force structure in Iraq should in part be designed to blunt the impact of Iran in Iraq. I think that is too broad a mission and I think sending that signal to the Bush Administration while they're still in office potentially gives them cover to engage in more aggressive military action."

As for domestic issues, Obama said, "Obviously, there are differences between health-care plans and energy plans, although they're relatively modest. They're more issues of emphasis than they are major ideological differences. I think the differences on domestic issues have more to do with what we think is needed to deliver on the promises that we're making to the American people." Obama, who was sticking more closely to talking points than he had in previous conversations, went on, "Hillary is running, in many ways, a textbook campaign. But it's a textbook that I think is inadequate to the moment. It's a textbook that says you don't answer tough questions directly because it may make you a bigger target in the gen-

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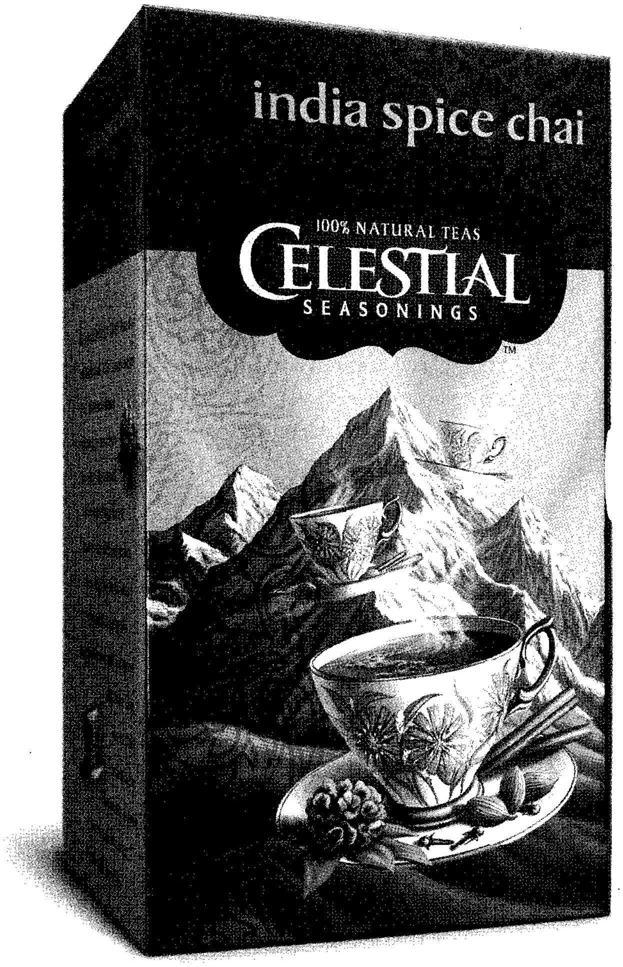
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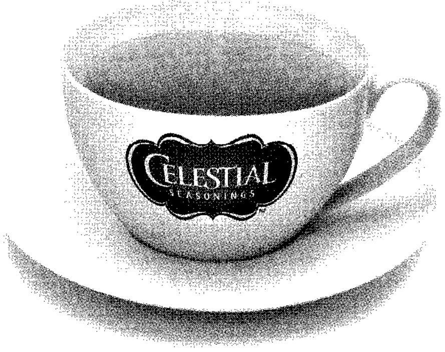
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eral election—that you tell people what they want to hear but avoid telling some hard truths.”

“Hard truths” could be the slogan for the re-started Obama campaign, which, until the October 30th Democratic debate in Philadelphia, had been viewed as listless and fading. (By contrast, Hillary Clinton was often called the inevitable nominee.) During that debate, Clinton’s performance was criticized as evasive and weak; Clinton herself acknowledged, “I wasn’t at my best.” Afterward, David Axelrod, Obama’s chief strategist, summoning all the spin at his command, described the new, unfettered Obama: “The public is looking for someone who will level with them, even when it means telling them things that they don’t necessarily agree with or want to hear. They value honesty. They value candor. They value straightforwardness. They don’t want calculation and parsing. They don’t want someone who confers with their pollster on every move.”

Obama has begun to embrace positions that a generation of Democrats have been advised to avoid. The political “textbook” calls for a relatively inexperienced first-term senator to run hawkishly. Obama, whom Clinton criticized when he said that he would negotiate directly and without preconditions with America’s adversaries, now makes it a point to mention that he would sit down with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iran’s President. On the question of torture, which Obama unequivocally opposes, the political temptation is to signal a willingness to show no mercy to our worst enemies, in much the way that Governor Bill Clinton, in his first campaign for President, returned to Arkansas for the execution of Rickey Ray Rector, a mentally disabled death-row inmate. On the increasingly perilous subject of illegal immigration, Obama favors issuing state driver’s licenses to undocumented workers, and tells voters, “We are not going to send twelve million people back home.” When discussing his energy plan, Obama says, “You can’t deal with global warming without, at least, on the front end, initially, seeing probably some spike in electricity prices,” and on Social Security he proposes what is, in effect, a large tax hike. These issues all have one thing in common: Hillary Clinton’s positions are artfully vague—aimed at surviving the general election—while Obama insists that it is more important to be forthcoming.

On Social Security, Clinton has avoided a detailed approach to fixing the system, which is expected to run out of money by the twenty-forties; for now, she would appoint a trusty “bipartisan commission” to recommend solutions. Obama proposes raising the ceiling on income that is subject to the payroll tax. As a political strategy, this appears to be a terrible idea. A potential crisis in the Social Security system is a long way off. Why, then, would a new President spend political capital on yet another tax hike when he will almost certainly seek to undo the Bush tax cuts for more immediate demands, like universal health care? When I asked Obama about this, he smiled and leaned forward, as if eager to explain that my premise was precisely the politically calibrated approach that he wanted to challenge. “What I think you’re asserting is that it makes sense for us to continue hiding the ball,” Obama said, “and not tell the American people the truth—”

I interrupted: “*Politically* it makes sense—”

He finished the sentence: “—to not tell people what we really think?”

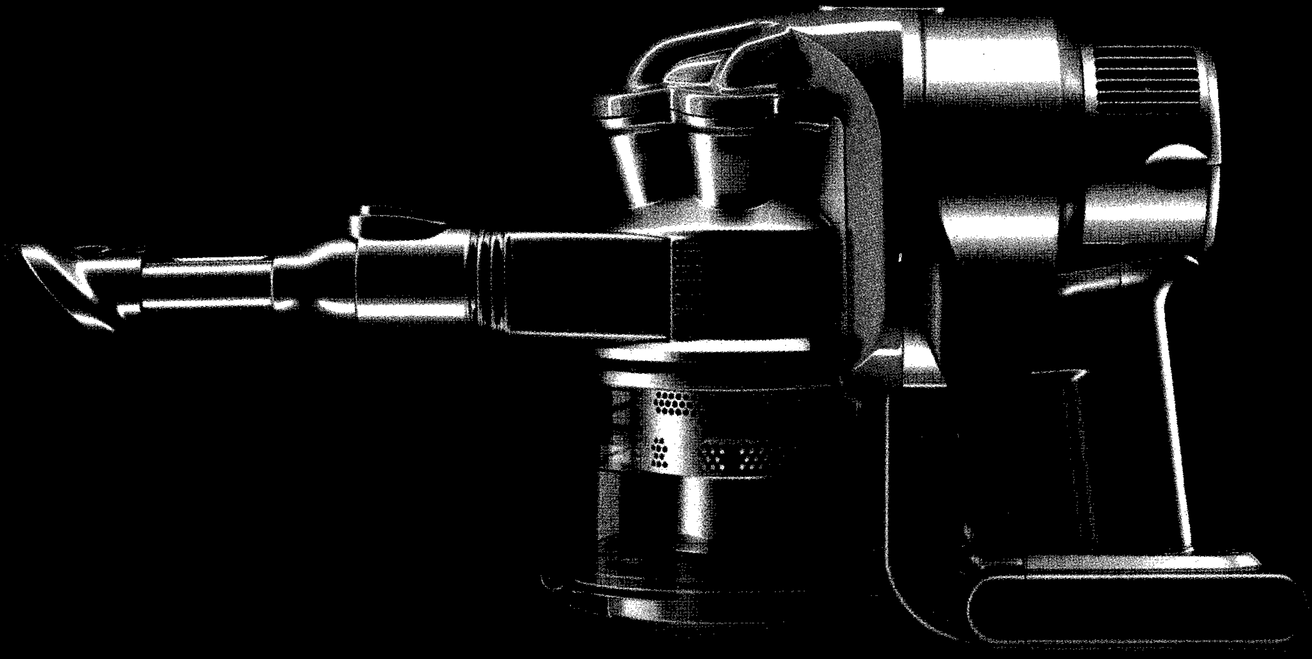
“And will your father know what this is about, sir?”

Obama’s classroom lesson was not about Social Security but about the narrative of the Presidential campaign. “This is precisely the argument that I have with Senator Clinton,” Obama said. “This is what I mean by a textbook campaign. I think there is a conventional wisdom, and this is part of the reason I think Senator Clinton’s campaign has up until now been so well received by the national press.” In other words, political journalists have rewarded the Clinton campaign for its tactical proficiency rather than criticized it for policy inconsistencies.

I asked Obama whether he thought that journalists “respect” Clinton for being so good at politics. “Absolutely. I don’t *think* that—” he began, at which point Robert Gibbs, his communications director, interrupted to say that the correct word was “revere.” Obama smiled and added, “I think a classic example was when Adam Nagourney writes on the front page of the New York *Times* an admiring piece about how Hillary has finessed the fact that she voted for the war and gotten people to forget about it.” The article, which was co-written by Patrick Healy and published early last August with the headline “SLOWLY, CLINTON SHIFTS ON WAR, QUIETING FOES,” was hardly admiring. When I asked Nagourney about Obama’s contention, he replied in an e-mail, “This was a very straightforward and simple story: reporting the fact that Mrs. Clinton had repositioned herself on the war in a significant way, and had done so apparently unnoticed by the press and—dare I say?—her opponents.”

It is often true that political reporting is overly focussed on tactics, and, as Obama argues, that coverage of the Clinton campaign—its professionalism and

Dirt has nowhere to hide.



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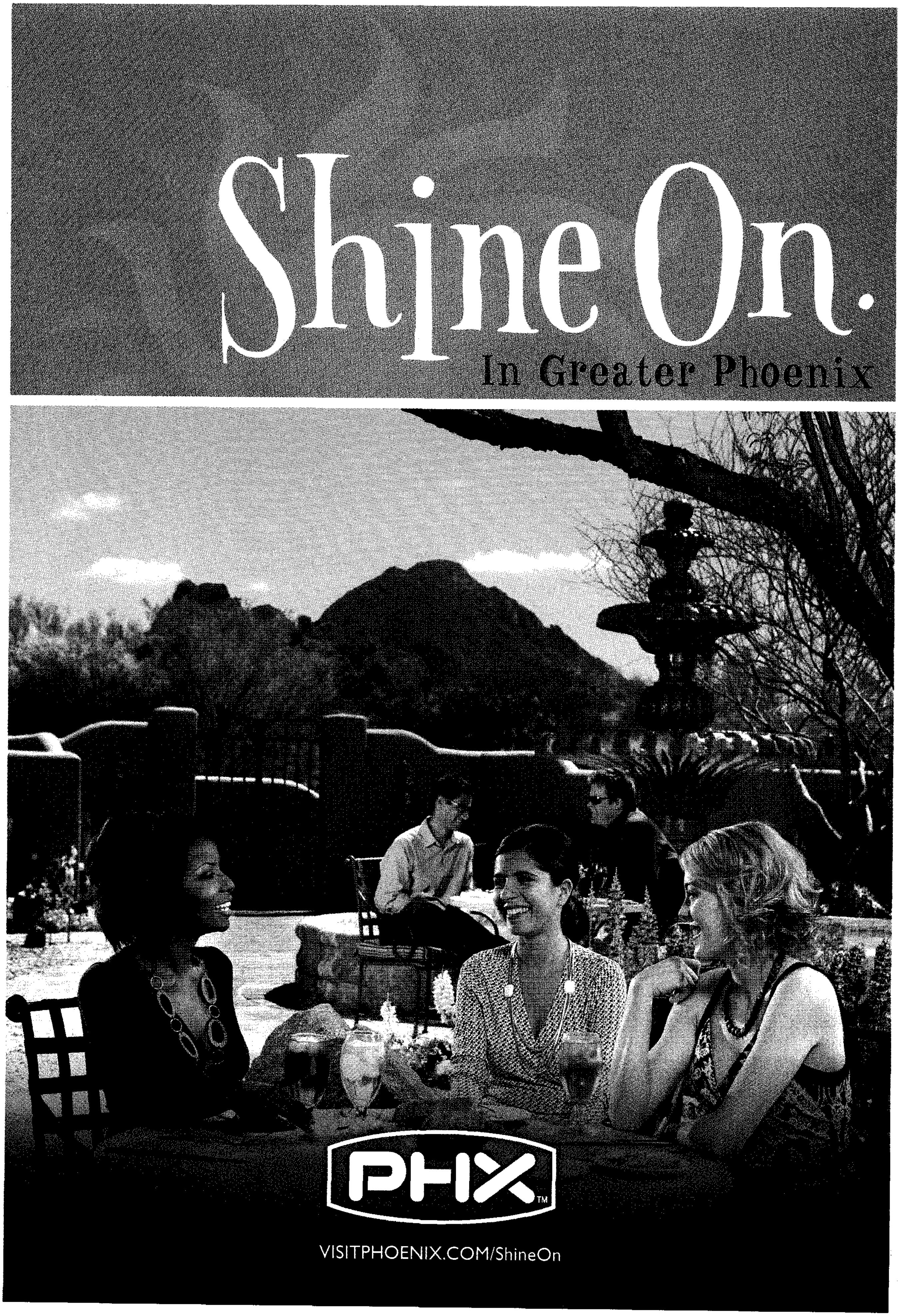
organization—has at times been fawning. Obama's pique at the *Times* piece was revealing, suggesting a hope that journalists would make the case against Clinton that Obama himself had declined to make; the Philadelphia debate marked the beginning of his realization that neither his surrogates nor the press were adequate substitutes. He had to make the case himself, and so he rolled out his hard-truths theme. The response from Hillary Clinton so far has been scorn. "For the life of me, I don't understand what my opponents are trying to achieve," she told the *Time* columnist Joe Klein. When he asked Clinton about her reluctance to support funding Social Security with higher payroll taxes on the wealthy, she replied, "I am not going to support a trillion-dollar tax increase." In explaining why her energy-independence plan is superior to Obama's, she said, "It's got to be politically done."

Obama hopes to persuade voters that doing things "politically" is precisely the problem. He is sometimes criticized for being self-righteous when he berates politicians for behaving like politicians, for he is a skilled politician himself, and there is a political aspect to his argument: he wants voters to contrast what he sees as Clinton's cynical calculation with his brave honesty. But Obama also wants to make a more substantive point, showing that an emphasis on truthtelling during a campaign can in the long run be better politics. "What happens when we finesse the big issues during the campaign is we never build a mandate," he told me. "Because the American people start thinking, You know what, these problems are pretty easy to solve. Then we start to actually try to move something through, and then—oops! It turns out we might have to deal with the tax code or there might be a cost associated with capping energy costs. And people aren't ready for it. Republicans exploit the gap between people's expectations during a campaign and what actually has to get done. And that's why we keep on putting things off. So if you believe that these are problems that are incremental in nature, that really you just have to do a tweak here and a tweak there, and that our big problem has been that George Bush has just been a poor manager of government, then I think that Hillary's arguments are persuasive."

At Obama headquarters in Des Moines, every other Monday staffers train the precinct captains who will be in charge of rounding up Obama supporters on caucus night, January 3rd. At a recent training session, Chelsea Waliser, an energetic twenty-five-year-old from Washington state, was explaining the byzantine rules of the caucuses—how to win the most delegates for your candidate—to nine women and eight men sitting in a semicircle on mismatched chairs and couches. Waliser, who has long curly red hair, stood before a large pad of paper filled with equations, the sort of thing that sometimes makes the Iowa caucuses seem designed to alienate ordinary people and prevent them from participating. At one point in her presentation, Waliser said, "You have thirty-one members within the preference group. You multiply that by the number of delegates the caucus is going to elect. So how many is that? Eleven, correct. Then divide that by the total number of eligible caucus attendees. So how many caucus attendees do we have? One hundred and four. And then do our math: thirty-one times eleven—three hundred and forty-one, divided by one hundred and four, equals three point two eight." Her precinct captains looked on in semi-baffled silence.

Unlike the Republican caucuses in Iowa, which are fairly simple, akin to a straw poll, the Democratic caucuses are arcane, rule-bound Party meetings where members are not picking Presidential candidates but choosing delegates to their county conventions. Winning the most delegates for your favored candidate requires not only a sure grasp of mathematics but a keen understanding of group dynamics. In 2004, John Kerry's precinct captains were generally professionals who knew how to use caucus arithmetic to get more delegates for their candidate, while Howard Dean's captains were young and poorly trained newcomers who were outmaneuvered in caucus rooms across the state. Waliser is training her captains to be disciplined. Within each precinct, she counselled, an Obama team had to include people responsible for specific tasks, including a "host," a "greeter," a "checker," and a "persuader." And then there's the "corraller." At each caucus, any candidate who does not gain the support of a certain percentage of the attendees—typically, fifteen per cent—is considered nonviable, and supporters may disband and align with other candidates. "Realignment" is a chaotic moment when campaigns descend on each other's groups and try to poach from them. The arguments used during realignment are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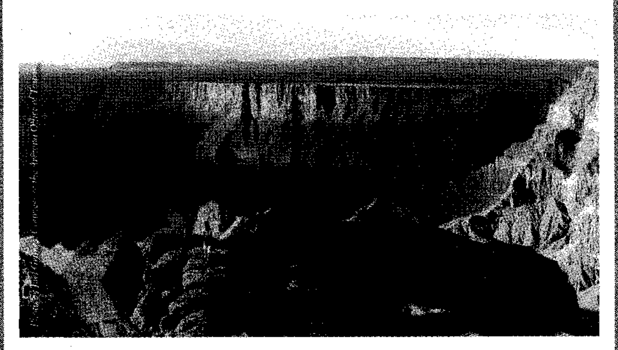

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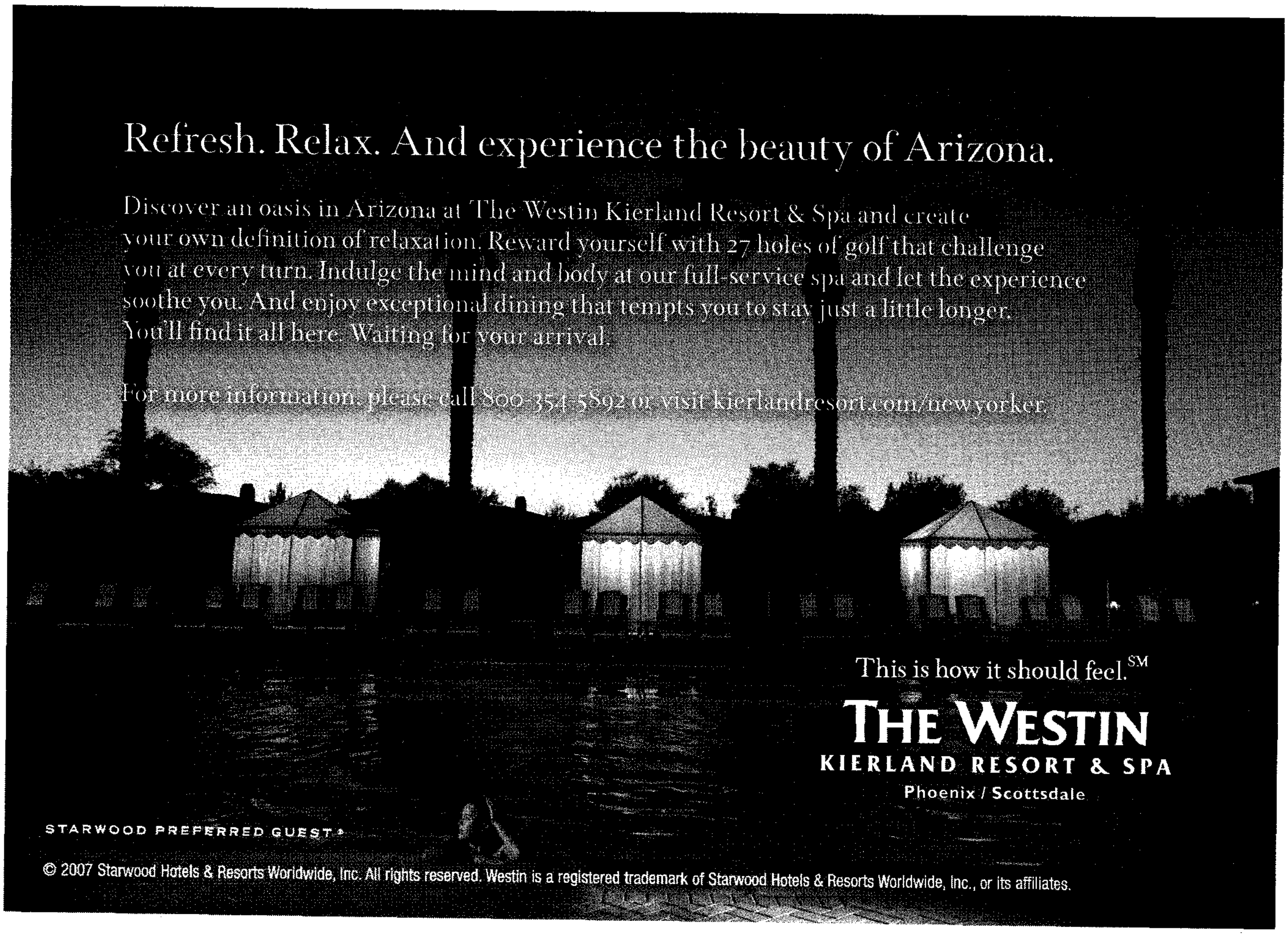

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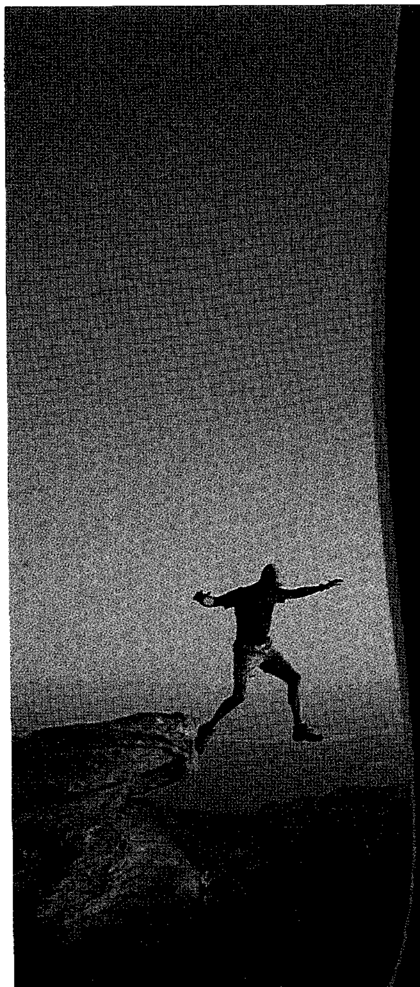

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of the most famous views in the Southwest – the **Painted Desert** is a vast expanse of red desert punctuated by sandstone cliffs. Also on Navajo land, just east of Page, you'll discover **Antelope Canyon**, where shifting light plays daily in cathedrals of sculpted rock. The best piece of advice we can give you on your journey? Don't leave your camera at home.

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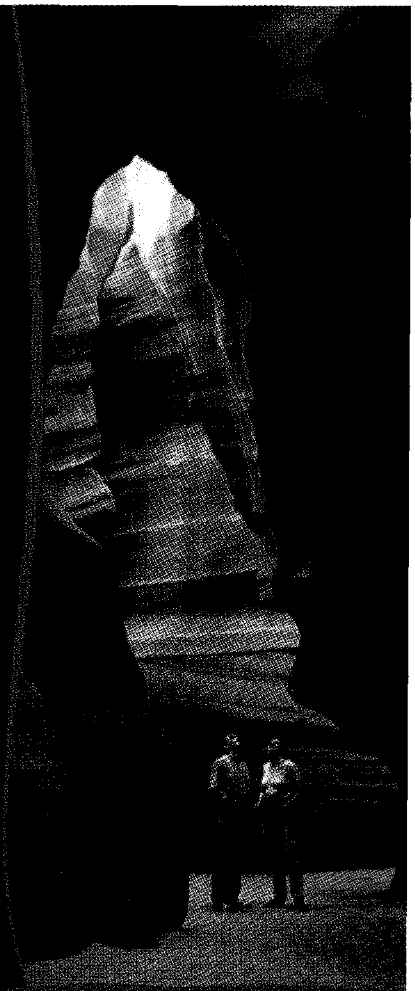

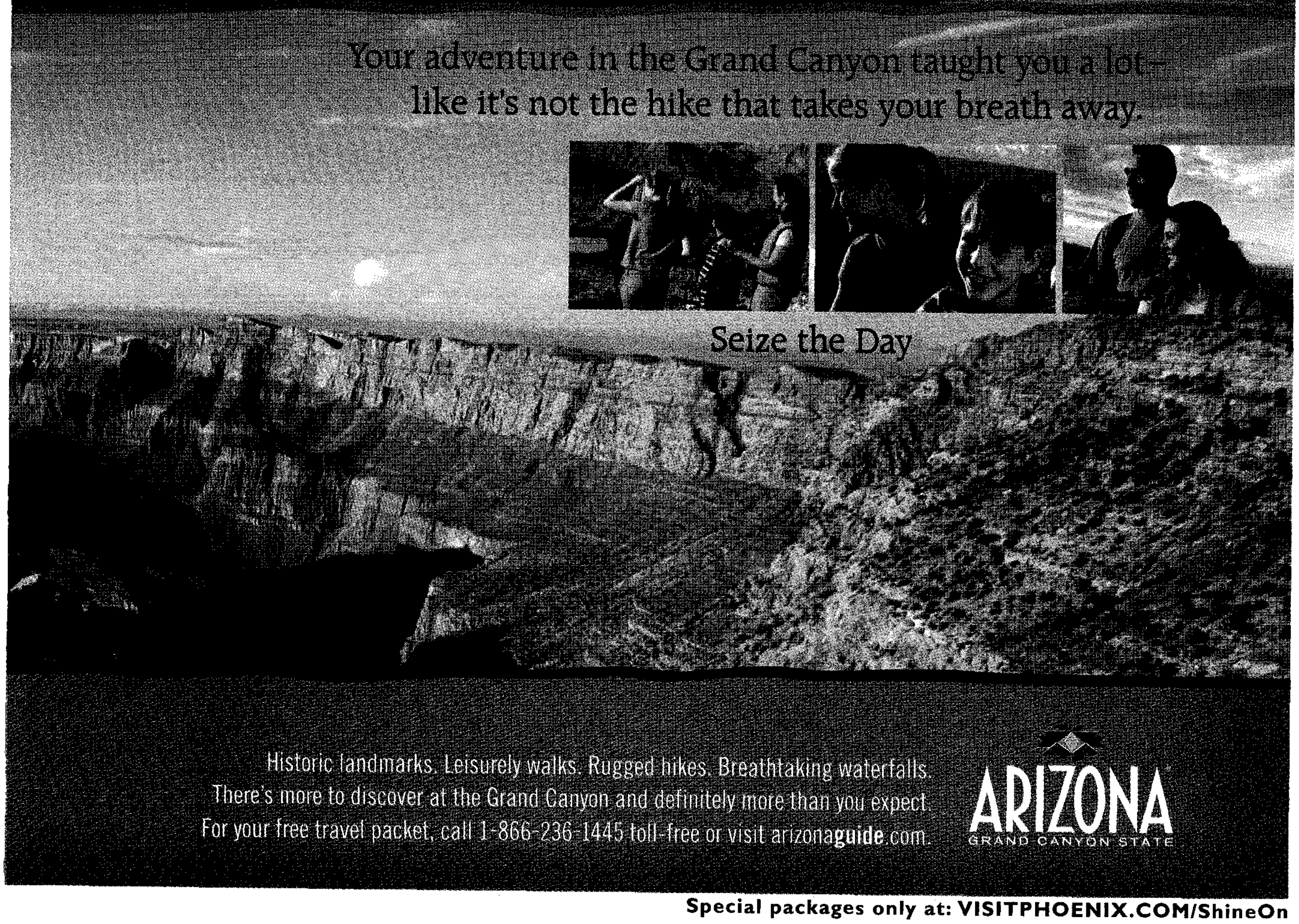
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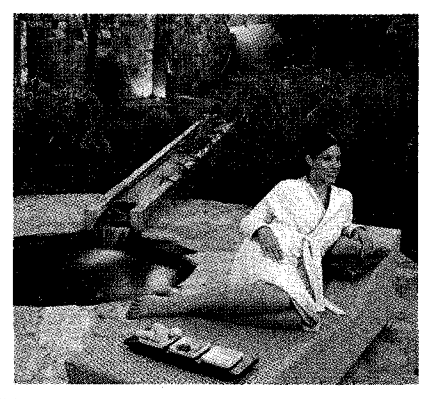
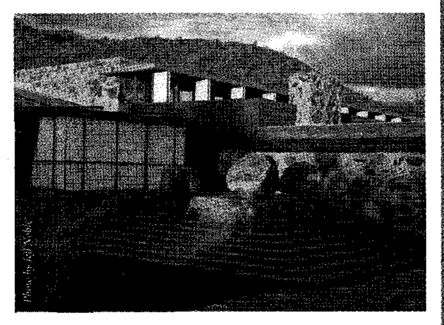
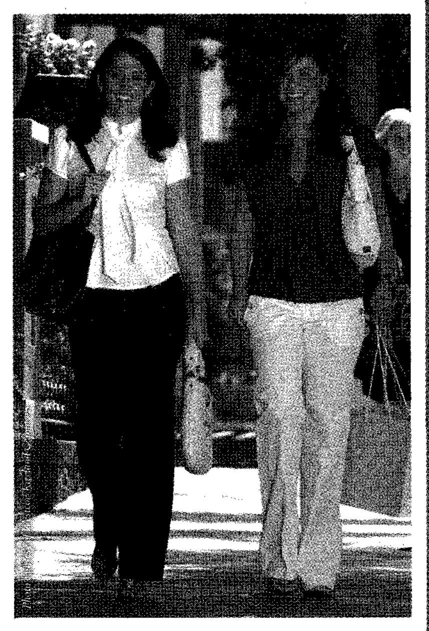


ARTS AND CULTURE | Despite being a young city, Greater Phoenix is home to a very storied culture, as displayed in the beautiful Native American artistry at the world-renowned Heard Museum and the architectural mecca of Frank Lloyd Wright's famed Taliesin West. In addition, those seeking inspiration can find it within numerous galleries along the First Fridays Artwalk and the grand venue of the Phoenix Art Museum.



SHOPPING | If there is one thing that can be said of Greater Phoenix, it is that you can always find everything under the sun. There are shops filled with Native American jewelry, galleries filled with distinctive Southwestern art, eclectic boutiques and charming specialty shops, plus enough open-air shopping venues to house every favorite retailer.



So where will the day take you in Greater Phoenix? Will it send you up a foothill trail to find the peak of exhilaration? Will it provide the opportunity to explore the finer points of poolside rest and spa-induced relaxation? No matter what you choose to explore, you're sure to soak up all the sun-filled joy in the journey.

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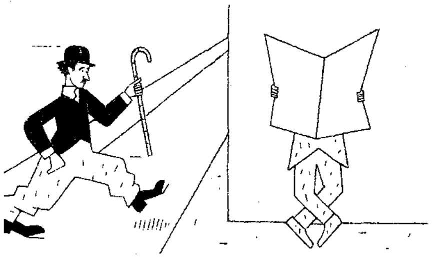
notoriously haphazard, ranging from the high-minded ("Join my group because my candidate opposed the war") to the pedestrian ("Join my group because I loaned you a snow shovel last week"). This, Waliser explained, is why every Obama group needed a corraller—to ward off the poachers. "This person will in a polite and respectful manner physically contain the Obama group and ask them to stay in their place," she told her precinct captains. She suggested feeding them in case they got restless. "The name of the game on caucus night is stand and stay, so this is where the chocolate-chip cookies are crucial."

If Hillary Clinton wins in Iowa, she will be harder to stop in later contests. For Obama, the cookies are just the beginning of his campaign's attention to detail and to the realities of Iowa politics. While Waliser was teaching the intricacies of caucus-night mechanics, a thousand miles away, in Washington, D.C., an array of forty-eight computer processors were mining census demographics, consumer-marketing data, and Iowa-state voter files to form one of the most sophisticated and data-rich portraits of an electorate ever created. This is the work of Ken Strasma, who is among the Democratic Party's most admired numbers gurus. After being pursued by all the major candidates, Strasma, who helped Kerry to win Iowa in 2004, decided to commit his firm, Strategic Telemetry, to Obama.

In the nineteen-nineties, consultants loved to talk about finely sliced pieces of the electorate pie, such as "soccer moms," and seemed to discover new segments of the electorate as if they were minor planets in the Kuiper belt. In 2000 and 2004, campaigns used consumer data to work out simple correlations in order to target voters. (For instance, Prius owners tend to vote for Democrats, while S.U.V. owners tend to vote for Republicans.) In the past few years, though, this so-called "microtargeting technology" has made great leaps forward. Strasma's firm builds profiles of voters that include more than a thousand indicators, long strings of data—everything from income to education to pet ownership—that he calls "demographic DNA."

"The actual combinations that we come up with aren't really anything that you could put on a bumper sticker," Strasma told me. "You know, soccer moms or office-park dads. Sometimes people will ask to see the formula, and it comes out to ten thousand pages long." When the demographic DNA is combined with polling and interviews with Iowa voters, Strasma is able to create the political equivalent of a FICO score—the number that creditors use to determine whether a consumer is a good bet to repay a loan. Strasma's score tells the campaign of the likelihood that a specific Iowan will support Obama.

Obama, who had sometimes seemed to eschew the details of campaigning which Clinton appears to revel in, has become more enmeshed in the state's idiosyncratic politics. Consider the conquest of Gordon Fischer, a former chairman of the Iowa Democratic Party. Every campaign wanted Fischer's endorsement, but the Obama campaign pursued him relentlessly. At a recent lunch at the Des Moines Embassy Club, a restaurant on the forty-first floor of the tallest building in the state, Fischer explained how Obama's Iowa operatives used his closest friends to persuade him to back Obama. One, Lola Velázquez-Aguilú, managed to decorate part of Fischer's house with photographs of Obama that featured thought bubbles asking for Fischer's endorsement. ("Has anyone told you how great you look today?" an image of Obama taped to a mirror said. "So, are you ready to sign a supporter card?") When Obama staffers learned that the late Illinois senator Paul Simon was a hero of Fischer's, they asked Simon's son-in-law, Perry Knop, to call Fischer and make the case for Obama. At one point, Obama himself invited Fischer onto his campaign bus and told him that he had to stay aboard until he agreed to an endorsement. When Fischer insisted that he had to make the decision with his wife, Monica, Obama demanded Monica's cell-phone number, and he called her at once. "Monica, this is Barack Obama," he said when her voice mail came on.

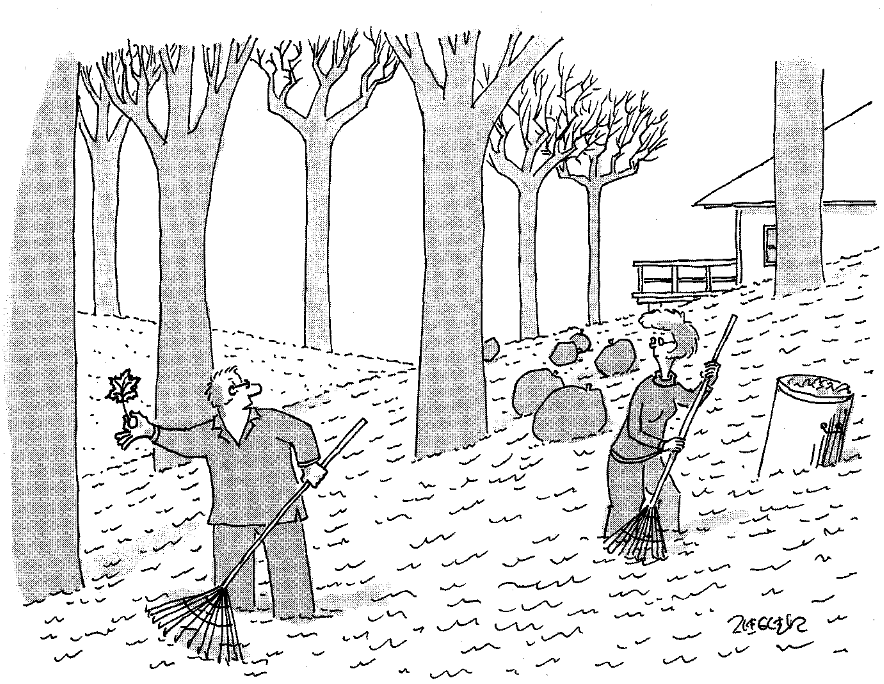


"I'm with your husband here, and I'm trying to go ahead and close the deal for him to support my candidacy. . . . Discuss it over with your man. Hopefully we can have you on board." The Fischers were sufficiently impressed to endorse him, two weeks later. "I think the Iowa campaign has been run better than the national campaign," Fischer said.

Obama entered the race as a national celebrity—the star of the 2004 Democratic National Convention. But what once was a national campaign has become an intensely local one. Chelsea Waliser's training sessions, Strasma's demographic algorithms, and the courtship of Fischer point to a campaign making its last stand in Iowa. On November 5th, Obama's campaign sent reporters a research memo that criticized Hillary Clinton for changing her position on ethanol, Iowa's most parochial issue. The Des Moines *Register*, Iowa's major daily, ignored it, but when the campaign offered Obama himself for an interview a story was assured; it appeared on November 7th, with the headline "OBAMA: CLINTON FLIP-FLOPS ON ENERGY."

I asked Obama whether ethanol was a subject that merited such personal attention. "It has less to do with the particular issue and more to do with her change in position," he replied. "Now, Hillary has been in the Senate for seven years now. She has consistently voted against ethanol, because the perception in New York state is that this is making gasoline more expensive and that it's a boondoggle. Those of us in farm states, obviously, have had a different perspective on it. If she came here, and she made a cogent case as to why she doesn't think ethanol makes sense and why she voted against it, that'd be one thing. After seven years, she comes here and suddenly she's an ethanol proponent! Well, how did that happen?" He managed to sound genuinely astonished by such brazenness.

In Obama's stump speech, he has adjusted to the realities of Iowa's preëminence in the nominating process. In small but important ways, he is sounding more partisan. Over the summer, he barely mentioned George W. Bush; now he emphasizes what he regards as a litany of Bush Administration policy debacles—the Iraq war, the tax cuts, dis-



"They're all pretty, but this one is my favorite."

• •

respect for the Constitution. The cool and cerebral Obama often gives way to a more fiery candidate who promises to "fight" for working people and against special interests, echoing some of the sharper language that John Edwards, the third major candidate in the race, has been using. And Obama now tries to make a more personal connection with voters. In the past, he has been accused of making his campaign more about himself than about those who come to his rallies. Now the word "you" is mentioned as much as the word "I." "You're not heard. They're not listening to what you need," he told a crowd assembled at a rodeo site in Fort Madison on a recent evening. "You deserve a President who is thinking about you."

Iowans have developed many sophisticated ways to squeeze dollars out of Presidential candidates, who are compelled practically to live in their state for four years. The Connecticut senator Christopher Dodd, whose chances of winning are negligible, recently relocated his family to Des Moines and enrolled his six-year-old daughter in kindergarten. For the Iowa Democratic Party, the annual Jefferson Jackson Dinner is the biggest and most profitable enterprise of the cycle. Candidates are encouraged to buy tickets for thousands of their supporters, who perform cheering and sign-waving ballets when their candidate speaks. In 1999, the event marked the turnaround of the Al Gore campaign, and in 2003 it launched John Kerry's revival. At this year's dinner, held on November 10th, in Des Moines's main entertainment arena, Veterans Memorial Auditorium, Obama's people wore red T-shirts and were split into two sections facing each other. When Obama entered the arena, his supporters launched into a raucous call-and-response of "Fired up! Ready to go!"—a cheer that Obama first heard last summer in South Carolina, when he was talking to a small group and an elderly woman in the room began to shout, "Fired up!" prompting the "Ready to go!" reply. Since then, these words have become his campaign's signature refrain.

Hillary Clinton's supporters wore Iowa yellow and green, and the rafters were dotted with what had just become her new campaign slogan: "Turn up the heat. Turn America around." It wasn't until she spoke that it became clear what she meant about turning up the heat. Clinton went on to deliver a series of anti-Republican one-liners, posed as questions, such as "When the Republicans cut Head Start, and refuse to fix No Child Left Behind, what do we do?" Her yellow-and-green army responded after each riff, "Turn up the heat!" Clinton's emphasis on the fall of 2008 rather than on the caucuses of January may prove to be a mistake. The vulnerability that Obama is exploiting is precisely Clinton's presumptuous turn toward the general election. Since the Philadelphia debate, polls have shown Obama narrowing the gap between him and Clinton in New Hampshire, and in Iowa polls have consistently shown a close race.

What was notable about Obama's speech at the dinner—one of his finest and most passionate—was not just the roaring choreography from his red-clad supporters but the way that, at 11:30 P.M., he galvanized the entire auditorium, with a succinct description of the difference between his campaign and Clinton's: "If we are really serious about winning this election, Democrats, we can't live in fear of losing it." Even many of Clinton's troops could be seen beating yellow thunder sticks together in appreciation. Obama seemed to be making an argument about the connection between boldness and electability. With Hillary Clinton, he suggested, there is an inverse relationship between the two: she is so polarizing that she is forced to be a milquetoast candidate in order to become an electable one.

Obama is not the most liberal candidate in the race, so he's not defining his boldness strictly in ideological terms but, rather, as a sort of anti-politics that prizes truthtelling above calculation. When I asked him about this new tack, he seemed supremely confident. "I've been an observer of politics for two and a half decades, and what I've seen is that Democrats have not been able to move their agenda through Washington," he said. "They have not been able to get the American people to embrace their domestic agenda, and they have been constantly on the defensive when it comes to their foreign-policy agenda. And it seems to me that, you know, if you're not getting the outcomes you want, you might want to try something different." ♦

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

NO, BUT WE SAW THE MOVIE

BY NORA EPHRON

When they got home that night, she went to get the book. She'd ordered it earlier in the week and meant to read it before they went to the movie, but it was a hard week and things got away from her. This was happening more and more.

Maybe if we look in the book we'll be able to figure it out, she said.

Maybe we'll find out what happened at the motel, he said. Why did it skip forward like that?

He said it's the same in the book.

Who said?

I told you who. The guy I was standing with while I was waiting for you to come out of the men's room. He read the book and he said it's the same deal exactly. The sheriff pulls up and everybody's dead. You never see the scene where they all get shot. Maybe it's because Javier didnt kill them.

Who's Javier?

Javier Bardem. The serial killer.

I thought it was Benicio Del Toro.

Well it wasnt. The guy outside the men's room said there's a scene in the book that's not in the movie. He said Javier goes to see a total stranger in some office, who's never been mentioned earlier. He gives him the satchel of money and he says, Here's your money back, now maybe you'll hire me to do things like this in the future.

Why did they leave that out?

How do I know? Write a letter to the Coen brothers.

She opened the book and started reading from the end.

He does this weird thing with contractions, she said. He uses apostrophes for words like that's and it's but he doesnt use them for dont and wasnt and wont. He doesnt use quotation marks, either.

Who?

Cormac McCarthy.

How am I supposed to know what you're talking about with all these pronouns? he said.

He went to get ready for bed.

I cant believe you didnt know Josh Brolin died, she said.

Well I didnt.

He was lying there in the parking lot.

I didnt see him lying in the parking lot.

Well I didnt see him either, but then his wife turned up and Tommy Lee Jones looked sad, so you knew he was dead.

I thought he looked sad because the mother was dead.

The mother? The mother doesnt die till later.

I thought it was the mother in the swimming pool.

How could you think it was the mother? It was the girl with the beer in the swimming pool. She was wearing a bikini. The mother was about a hundred years old. What would the mother be doing wearing a bikini? The mother dies of cancer. Jesus.

What happened to the satchel of money?

He gives it to a total stranger. I told you.

But in the movie what happens to the money?

She wondered if they'd ever know. Maybe the answers were buried in the caliche, along with some character who had figured in a story toward the end of the movie. She hadnt been able to follow the story about the character who was buried in the caliche because she was busy trying to puzzle out what happened to the satchel of money, but the word caliche stuck in her head. It was pronounced ka-lee-chee. Since they lived in New York City and were not about to go dig a hole in Central Park, it didnt seem like a particularly useful word, but you never know.

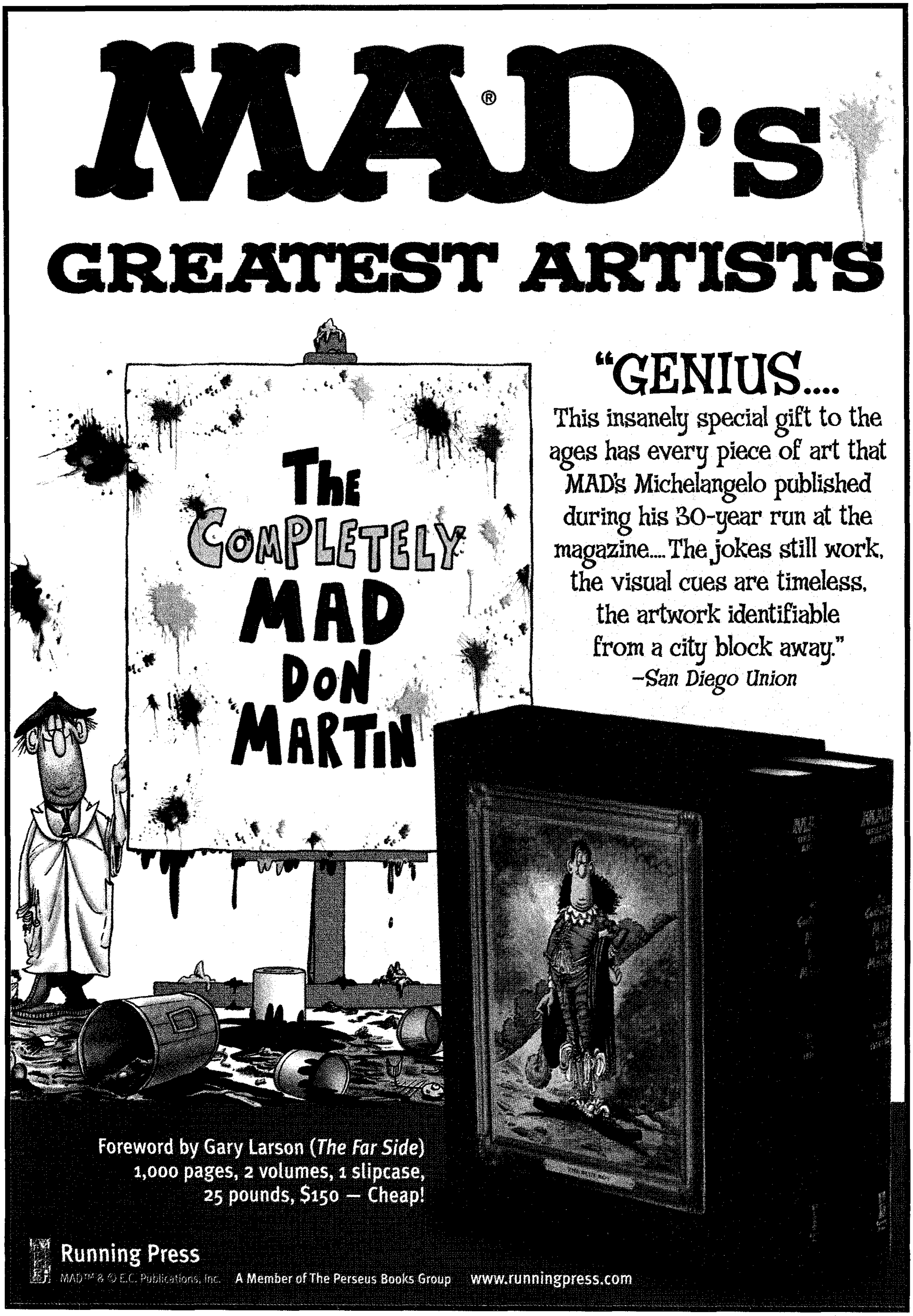
He got into bed.

I cant believe you didnt know Josh Brolin died, she said. Who did you think was lying on that slab in the morgue?

The mother, he said.

The mother? she said. The mother?

He was asleep. ♦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OUR LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

THE PATRON

The man to see in Little Colombia.

BY ALEC WILKINSON

Over the summer, a woman carrying two suitcases appeared before Orlando Tobón in his office, in Jackson Heights, Queens. Her eyes were red from weeping. The previous day, in Miami, she had received unwelcome news, and that morning she had boarded a flight to New York, because she had once seen Tobón interviewed on Telemundo, the Spanish-language TV station, and felt that he could help her. The woman was Colombian. A headline in June in *El Tiempo*, a Bogotá newspaper, described Tobón as the “Angel of Colombians in the United States.”

Orlando Tobón in Queens, where he runs a travel agency and tax-preparation business. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

The woman had just left Tobón’s office when I arrived. On his desk was a file card on which he had written some notes of their conversation. “This is happening in 2001, at the end of November,” he said. “The lady has a son sixteen years old, and she is living in Los Angeles. To protect him from gangs, she send him to a sister and a grandmother in Colombia, in Cali. One day, he disappear. The police find nothing. He just vanish.”

Tobón tapped the card on his desk. “Three or four weeks ago,” he went on, “the police in Colombia arrest a guy whose work is to find people to bring drugs to the United States, what they call mules.” The mules swallow pellets the size of large grapes, which are usually made from condoms filled with cocaine; how many depends on how big the mule is—sixty is typical, a hundred extraordinary. If the condoms don’t leak, the mule survives, and, assuming that he or she delivers the drugs, receives between five and ten thousand dollars. “Believe it or no, this guy says that, in 2001, he fly with this kid to New York,” Tobón said. “They pass immigration and customs, but, when they arrive at the house where the guy is to give up the drugs, he die. The dealer open the boy’s stomach and take the drugs, and they throw the body someplace around New York.”

Tobón shook his head. “Yesterday, the police call the mother,” he said. On his desk Tobón had the boy’s birth certificate, his Social Security card, and his passport picture. The boy’s face was narrow and angular, and his hair was cut close to his head. He was wearing a dark jacket, a white shirt, and a dark tie, and he was looking uncertainly into the camera’s lens.

The next morning, I was in Tobón’s office when the boy’s mother returned. She was small and had brown hair, and she sat on a chair beside Tobón’s desk. Since Tobón had last seen the woman, he had spoken with her sister in Colombia. “We have a little more information,” he gently told the woman. “The dealer guy told the police they throw the body in the Hudson River.” The woman pressed her hands into her lap, and shuddered. She lowered her head. Then she took deep breaths and spoke softly to herself in Spanish.

Raising her head finally, she said, “But that’s crazy.” She wiped tears from her cheeks.

Tobón said that he would call the

Women's LIBERATION.

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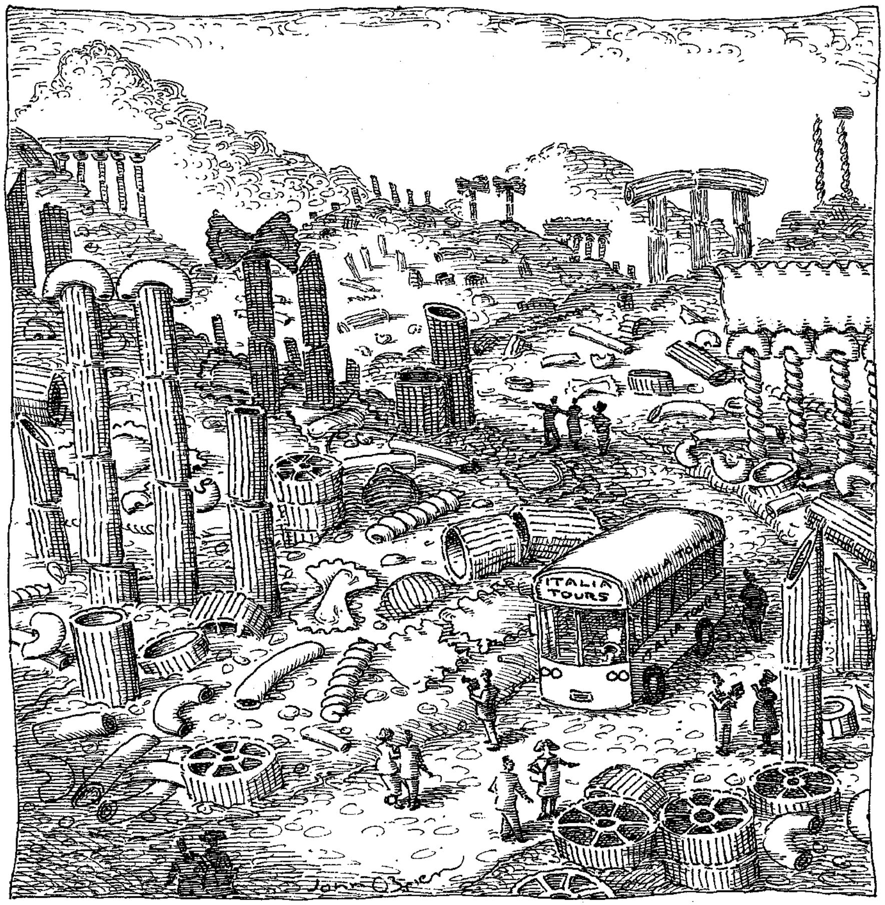

police. First, he phoned a woman he knew. “Bonnie, you know a guy in the 115th Precinct we can talk to and get help?” he asked. (The 115th is the precinct for Jackson Heights.) “It’s drug-related, but I need somebody who can speak Spanish.”

Tobón hung up and told the woman that he would try to get the Spanish-language stations in the city to carry the story. Maybe someone would recognize the boy from his picture and know what had happened to him. The woman nodded blankly. She stood and took a few steps, then sat down in a chair beside the one she had been sitting in.

“Please help me find my son,” she said. “These six years, I cannot sleep.”

Twenty thousand Colombians live in Jackson Heights, where Tobón owns Orlando Travel, a storefront travel agency and tax-preparation business, at 84-02 Roosevelt Avenue, in the Roosevelt shopping center, home of Le Paris’s Perfumes, with its window display of Colombian currency. Tobón’s office is the size of a bedroom in a modest apartment. He has no employees. Hung on the walls are photographs of Tobón with various celebrities and dignitaries: Plácido Domingo; Pedro Sevcec, a newscaster for Telemundo; Tito Puente; Bill Clinton; and Hillary Clinton, among others. Three corners of the room have desks, and in the fourth corner is the door. One of the desks is sometimes occupied by Mauricio Palacios, a handsome young Colombian who has what he calls “a chess player’s physique.” Palacios sells a form of burial insurance for Colombians that Tobón endorses. In the afternoon, the second desk is now and then occupied by a dark-haired fourteen-year-old girl named Jenny Vargas, who answers the phone so that Tobón can leave for lunch. On his desk he has a green marble nameplate, like a judge. Tobón, who is sixty, is of medium height and corpulent. He has wavy, wiry black-and-gray hair and a mustache. His features are slightly askew: his mouth slants down to the left and the line of his front teeth is uneven. His eyes are dark and heavy-lidded, and his gaze is direct and comforting. Sometimes, he closes his eyes before he speaks, as if making an effort of memory or will. When he is seated, the desk appears to bisect him. He looks like a bust of himself.

Tobón charges forty dollars to prepare a tax return; some people pay more and some pay nothing. In high season, he completes between sixty and a hundred returns a day and sleeps two or three hours a night. Frequently, his clients assume that their only obligation is *los taxes federales* and are surprised when they hear from the state and the city. They tend to pay their taxes with money orders. For his advice, the men often palm five dollars and shake his hand, as if paying a headwaiter for a table. He puts the money in his shirt pocket, which functions as a floating bank; when someone needs a handout, Tobón reaches into his pocket. He makes the bulk of his living by April, then pays a year’s rent on his office and his apartment—he makes thirty-five thousand dollars in a slow year and forty-five thousand in a brisk one. The rest of his time he devotes to helping Colombians.

According to Arturo-Ignacio Sánchez, an assistant professor at Cornell who studies immigrant communities, and who has known Tobón for fifteen years, the Colombian community is turbulent, fractious, and fragmented. “I don’t even like to use the word ‘community,’ ” Sánchez says, “because it implies unity.” Enmities flare up and flourish and grow exceedingly personal. Tobón, whose manner is mild and sympathetic, unites parts of the community that might not otherwise speak to one another. Sánchez describes him as “a go-between.” In addition, he is a version of elder—familiar with the arcane and tribal customs of the new world, a circumstance that Sánchez describes as being “transnationalized.”

“People from Colombia get off the plane, and they have one phone number, and it’s Orlando’s,” Sánchez says. “In Colombia, it is typical to have a patron, and Orlando is a patron. He sits behind his desk, and he’s jovial, and he’s a figure very much within characteristic social relationships for an immigrant society. The Colombian social order revolves more around personalities than around institutions. There are Orlandos in almost every immigrant community.”

At Orlando Travel, the men and

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[CIT: BEHIND THE BUSINESS]

Trevor Macy and Marc Evans of Intrepid Pictures

Longtime friends Trevor Macy and Marc Evans slipped off the golden handcuffs of corporate entertainment and launched Intrepid Pictures in 2004. Here's the general story line.

Describe your business.

Trevor: We're a production house that develops, produces and finances modestly budgeted movies intended for a wide audience. To us, that means action, thriller, comedy or horror, with budgets under $30 million, intended for the 12-29 audience of avid movie-goers.

You both worked for some of the biggest entertainment companies in Hollywood. Why did you leave?

Trevor: We both moved gradually from the corporate to the entrepreneurial. I went from Disney to Turner Pictures, where we essentially educated a cable company about the movie business, to Sundance, where we started Sundance Channel and Sundance Cinemas.

Marc: I have a similar progression—Disney to Turner Pictures to TNT Originals, where we operated an entrepreneurial entity within a larger cable company, making 8-10 movies per year and starting an original series business for the network. I moved to Revolution Studios, where I helped start a movie company from scratch, and that experience shored up my courage to start my own.

From an everyday perspective, does work life feel very different?

Marc: Yes. We started in a tiny space with a glass partition between us. We had to do everything from fixing the fax to pulling together complicated film models to teasing out the business plan to working with writers and developing scripts.

What is the biggest challenge of launching a startup?

Marc: At a big company, you have resources at hand, vast institutional knowledge, lots of peer expertise. When you run into something, the odds are somebody else has tackled it. In an entrepreneurial environment, you have to figure out a lot on your own. It's trial and error, and we've made our share of mistakes. You learn very quickly in an entrepreneurial environment.

Trevor: I think the hardest thing we did was raise the money. Not only were we starting our own company, but we had a relatively new take on the film business that made sense for institutional investors. The first question we got was, "Why should I invest in movies when creative accounting has stymied investors for years?" We found ourselves winning over one person at a time. That's a process that takes a lot of sales skills.

Marc: We probably took over 100 meetings with various investor groups.

Intrepid Pictures

What was the difference in your pitch?
Trevor: Our own unique skills. We grew up on the business side of things so we take an entrepreneurial approach that appeals to investors. We are seeking to invest in creative visions *and* apply a healthy dose of business sense. Most people who've been taken for a ride in Hollywood haven't taken a long-term approach to investing or have made a bad deal that they or their attorneys didn't understand. Because we've negotiated financing and distribution deals from the other side, we know where to keep an eye out.

You're a start-up among established studio players. What's your pitch to talent you want to land?
Trevor: Because we don't distribute films ourselves, we're not competing with studios. That can be a bad idea unless you have several billion dollars to invest in infrastructure. We can distribute through anybody. We can undertake projects in collaboration with studios.

Marc: We don't hire directors earning astronomical salaries. Our movies don't typically require A-list stars; they're more concept-driven. We use up-and-coming talent. We hire breaking writers. We also offer people a different environment to work in. We get the rights for a graphic novel or script and control the material until such time as we start to make it with the studio. If the project doesn't happen with one partner, we can take it somewhere else. That increases the talent's odds of getting their movie made. It doesn't disappear into a black hole like it can with a studio.

Trevor: Essentially, we pass the benefits of being independent along to the talent we work with.

One of your first pictures, *Balls of Fury*, opened Labor Day weekend. What kind of money does a film like that need to make?
Trevor: That depends on many variables, but in general we like to invest in films that can generate profits with $25-40 million in domestic box office, and have the potential to do more. We're proudly in the popcorn movie business.

Do critics' reviews matter?
Marc: Reviews matter less for this genre of movies; typically, critics don't like these films, anyway. You need to make a movie that generates buzz from peer review—teenagers walking out of a screening and texting their friends or blogging. That's much more critical to success than newspaper-based criticism.

Are you concerned that your audience is moving film entertainment from the theater to the Web and other media?
Marc: We certainly have to pay attention to the fracturing of the audience and its desire for more narrow-cast content. However, I also think that on a Friday or Saturday night, kids are only going to sit in front of a TV or computer for so long. Going to a movie is still a ritual that's important in American culture. It's still an inexpensive form of entertainment.

Trevor: I think the same people who are going to the

movies in theaters are buying the DVDs or watching them on pay television. Our notion is that if you create and own movies that connect with an audience, alternative means of delivery will only augment their value, both in media available now and media on the horizon. Our audience is hard to reach, and a movie's got to overcome quite a bit of noise from competition and alternative media. Savvy marketing is essential to the success of our films, or any film.

Are there people who have been key to your success?

Trevor: We had a lot of really good institutional support early on. Our partners at Rogue and Universal were instrumental in helping us find distribution. A team of lawyers helped us craft deals at a cut rate because they believed in what we were trying to do. JPMorgan Chase offered us a senior line of credit early on to help us raise the equity. CIT and its management have been among the biggest backers of the company. Their whole team has been very supportive and instrumental in launching and developing our business.

Marc: CIT moved faster than any institution I've ever seen to put money into all levels of our capital structure. It was just amazing.

Were there heroes or role models along the way?

Marc: I'm very much a product of my movie upbringing, so the two for me (whose movies rank as my top two) are Steven Spielberg and George Lucas. They had a vision and in the pursuit of it got a ton of flack and resistance—often from those they were producing the movies for. They created gigantic successes in the face of overwhelming obstacles. *Star Wars* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* cemented in my head the notion that movie-making had to be the best job on the planet.

Trevor: *Raiders of the Lost Ark* is hands-down the reason I'm in the movie business. Other early influences were Gene Roddenberry and Jim Henson. To me, they were among the most creative minds of their generation.

You both spent 10+ years in the majors before starting your own firm. Would you recommend that?

Marc: I wouldn't be where I am today had I not spent two years at Disney effectively getting my entertainment MBA. I think having experience with studios is critical because at some point you'll have to deal with them.

Trevor: Fundamentally, this is an apprentice business. I wouldn't advise anyone to jump in without learning the ropes at an agency or studio or with a producer. I wouldn't have been capable of starting this company in my early twenties.

If you were not making films, what would you be doing?

Trevor: Film-making is a little like serial entrepreneurship. Each film has its own creative bent, investment thesis. So there are times I think I'd make a good venture capitalist. There are also times I think I'd make a good chef.

Marc: I don't know that anything else captures my imagination quite like this business, that challenges the business and creative sides of my brain. Maybe, if I could develop the skill, I'd consider playing golf full-time.

For more insight from these business mavericks, visit **behindthebusiness.cit.com**

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[CIT: BEHIND THE BUSINESS]

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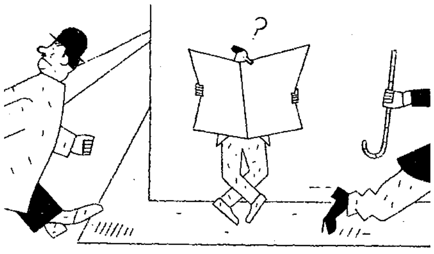
women and families pass like a small pageant of misfortune. From the doorway, they say, "*Perdón*, Señor Tobón," or simply, "Don Orlando." Three or four people are usually waiting to see him. The ones who don't know him tend to wait for him to wave them to a chair. The troubles they bring are not usually as dire as those of the woman who lost her son. A person whose matter is pressing sometimes leans across the desk toward Tobón. Sometimes, while the man or woman talks, Tobón holds a pen and clicks it. Occasionally, the conversations become hushed and extended and intimate. Husbands and wives occasionally confide secrets that they keep from each other. Now and then, Tobón sells an airline ticket.

In a recent week, a woman came to have her application for citizenship translated. Another woman arrived because her identity had been stolen. A man brought Tobón a wheelchair that had belonged to his mother, who had recently died—Tobón keeps a list of people who need wheelchairs. A woman came in with her daughter. The girl had been a mule and had spent time in prison. Now she wanted to work and needed a paper from the government to prove that her sentence had been served. A woman called from Colombia saying that her son had flown to New York a few days earlier, and because she had not heard from him she was concerned that he had been a mule. Tobón asked her to call him back with the number of the flight her son had taken.

One morning, a man named Diego Rojas came in with a *café con leche*, with three sugars, for Tobón. Rojas, who is forty, has an M.B.A., because his parents always told him he should have one, but, for the past couple of years, he has been collaborating with Tobón on several screenplays based on his life. A woman took a chair at Tobón's desk. Tobón spoke briefly to her, then shook his head.

"You see, finally he is doing his job as a travel agent," Rojas told me, as the woman left.

"And I have nothing for her," Tobón said. "She want to travel to Medellín on December 22nd, but everything is full already. Ah, but yesterday I sell a couple of tickets." He put on his glasses and began searching his desk for the paperwork.



Last year, Tobón's preoccupations took a practical turn when he was elected to represent District 39, in Queens, as a committee member for the New York State Democratic Party. He was persuaded to run by a group of Queens political figures who came to see him at his office. When he accepted, they threw him a party. "Everybody was happy, people were drinking—some of them were drunk," Rojas told me. "They said, 'Don't worry, tomorrow you'll get my check, you'll have my help, I'll get my people,' and the next morning we're sitting in Orlando's office, waiting for the money, and nothing came in. No volunteers, nothing. Nobody showed up. We went out flyering. Everyone said they would vote for him, but most of them don't vote anyway. His opponent invested about ten thousand dollars. We spent eight hundred."

"They had beautiful brochures, all colors, printed on special paper," Tobón said.

After the election, Rojas said, "People who had said they were going to help us started calling. For the whole campaign, we didn't see them. Now they're saying, 'The last night of the campaign, I was calling people for you all night long from my home.' "

When someone asks Tobón if he likes being a politician, he says no.

"Why did you do it?" I asked him.

"Other people wanted me to," he said, and shrugged.

City Councilman Hiram Monserrate, a former New York City cop who represents Tobón's district, says that Tobón "isn't the average politician. He's very different from the norm, I'll tell you that. He's not what I would term a polished political speech-giver. He's a man of the people, very large, a large man, but he speaks very softly, and that has worked very well for him."

Tobón's political career was helped by his movie career. In the 2004 movie

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1 of 1
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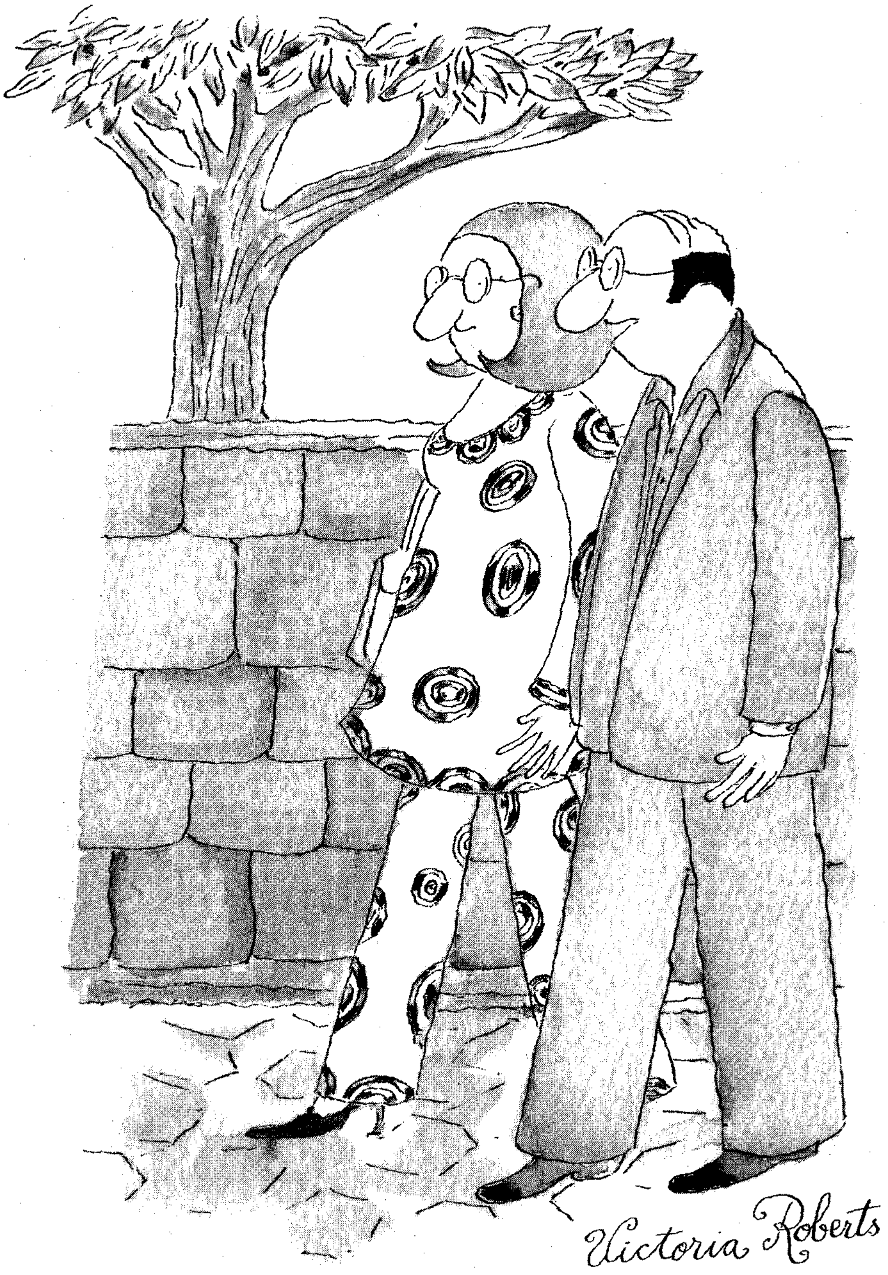
MENU

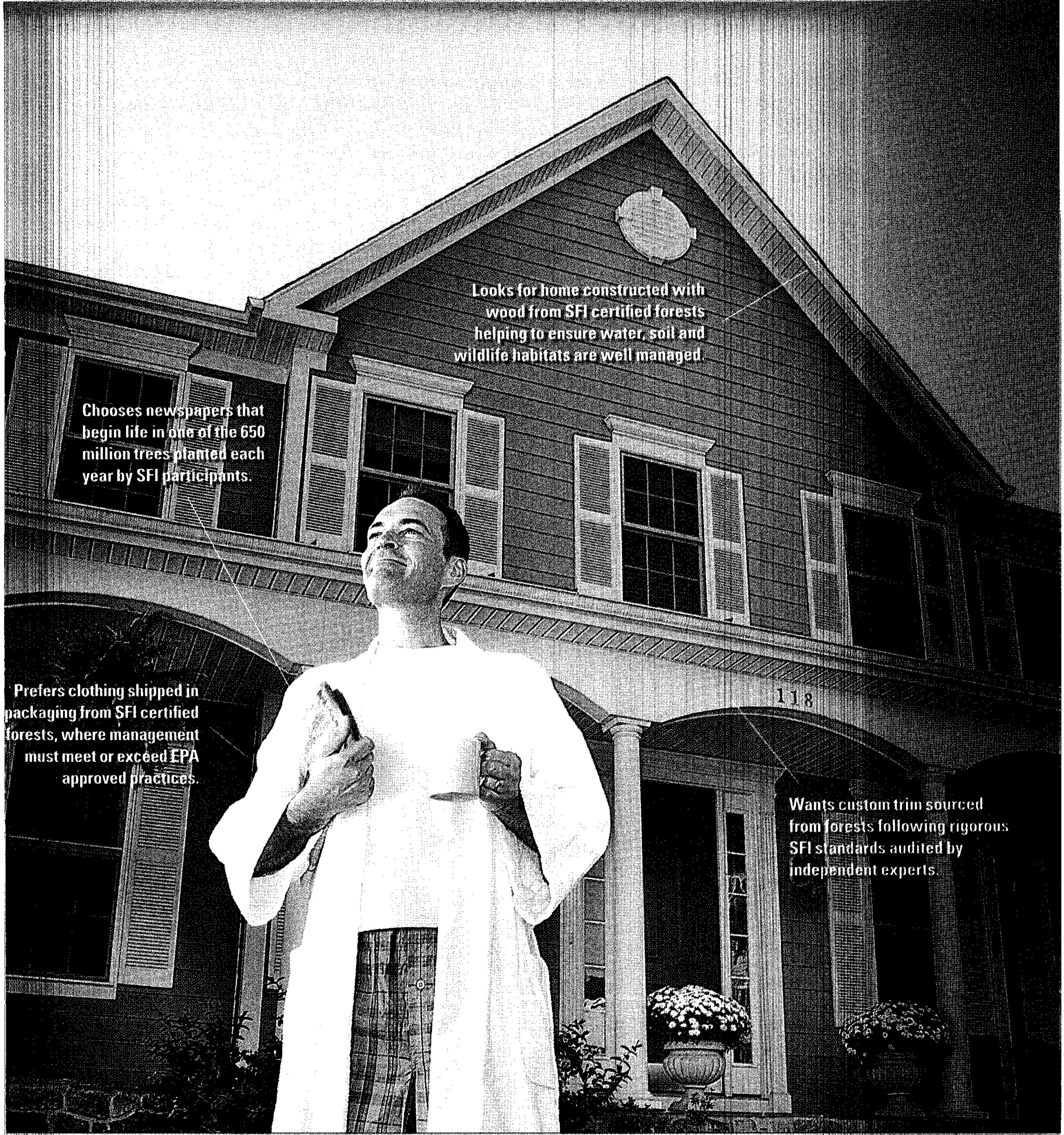
"María Full of Grace," directed by Joshua Marston, Tobón plays himself. The film concerns an impoverished young Colombian woman, María, who becomes a mule. (Catalina Sandino Moreno, who played María, was nominated for an Academy Award for best actress.) Marston was looking for financing when someone he was speaking to asked him if he had met Orlando Tobón, the mayor of Little Colombia. Initially, Marston wanted Tobón simply to read his script to see if it was plausible, but, he says, "fairly quickly I became impressed with the atmosphere of his office." He sat in Tobón's office on a number of occasions in the course of several months, listening to the troubles that people recited. By the time Marston was done visiting Tobón, he had written a role for him.

Tobón became acquainted with drug mules as a matter of circumstance. Soon after he set up his tax office, in 1974 (Orlando Travel opened in 1975), people began coming to him looking for work, or places to live, or advice about immigration. One day, a young woman who lived in his building came to see him because her sister had died in a car crash on Queens Boulevard. "Eighteen or nineteen years old," he says. "A more lovely person I have never seen in my life." The young woman wanted to send her sister's body to Colombia. Tobón went with her to the morgue. "We finish almost everything there when a lady give me the papers for the body, and then she say, 'She's very lucky, this girl.' And I say, 'What you mean, lucky? She die in a car accident.' " She was lucky, the woman said, because she had family to claim her body. She said that there were three young men in the morgue who she believed were Colombians and had died carrying drugs. Tobón said that he would make some calls to see if he could determine who the boys were. Through the consulate, he identified them and found their families, then raised money to send them home. Whenever a mule ended up in the morgue in the months after that, the woman called him. Tobón believes that mules who die have made a terrible mistake, and that there is no point in punishing the families further by denying them the right to bury their relatives. Typically, mules are decent people, haunted by poverty, he says. "The dealers go into the restaurants and the discos, and say, 'You can go to U.S. one or two times and be a rich person right away.' " A powerful hero who suddenly provides for everyone is the image that mules are susceptible to.



"If you fail one Rorschach test, you've failed them all."

Tobón estimates that he has overseen the return of fifteen hundred bodies, of which three hundred were drug mules. The insurance program that Mauricio Palacios sells out of Tobón's office is designed to return immigrants and travellers who die in America to Colombia for burial. It will also pay for a mourner to travel to Colombia for a funeral. At times, Tobón has disposed of the return of as many as five bodies in a week. For a family that has no insurance and cannot afford the cost of shipping the body, Tobón takes up a collection at the Colombian bars in Jackson Heights. Arturo-Ignacio Sánchez says, "Colombians have a propensity to respond to tragedies back home, and Orlando is part of that." To embalm a body and buy a coffin and a ticket for a flight to Bogotá costs about three thousand dollars. If Tobón cannot raise enough money, he has the body cremated—if the family agrees—because the ashes are less expensive to send. The oldest mule to die that Tobón knows of was an eighty-two-year-old woman, whose daughter had organized her trip. The youngest was seventeen. Years ago, Tobón says, he interceded with the airlines on behalf of a pregnant



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woman who had returned to Colombia after fighting with her husband in New York. She wanted her child to be born in America, but the airlines considered that her pregnancy was too advanced for her to fly. Tobón told her to wear a bigger dress, and, through friends of his who were pilots, was able to get her a flight. The baby, a boy, was born in Queens. Later, the woman had a daughter. About twenty years after that, the boy appeared, weeping, in Tobón's office. His sister had flown from Bogotá and been detained by customs in Miami, then was released and flew on to New York. She had been carrying drugs, and she died shortly after getting off the plane in New York. The boy asked Tobón for help with the funeral.

Tobón keeps no records of his work. A priest he knew who conducted funerals once told him that the only way he could protect himself from the police and from drug dealers was to have nothing on hand. As soon as he finishes a case, he destroys any papers connected with it. In 1993, a Spanish-language newspaper in Queens published a story suggesting that cash from drug deals was hidden inside the bodies of mules that Tobón returned to Colombia. A few weeks later, Tobón says, he began to feel that he was being followed. He went to the F.B.I. office at Kennedy Airport and spoke to an agent. "I said, 'You want something from me, let me know, but I don't want detectives behind me.' " The F.B.I. won't say one way or another what happened, but Tobón says that the agent told him, " 'Oh, no, Mr. Tobón, we're not following you,' and I say, 'How you know my name?' "

One evening, instead of leaving the garbage bags from Orlando Travel at the curb, Tobón drove them to a landfill in a remote area of Jamaica, dropped them there, and left. When he came back a few minutes later, his headlights framed two men searching through his trash.

"Next day, I go to the F.B.I. office," Tobón says, "and the agent tell me, 'Don't say nothing, I know the whole story.' I say, 'You're a big liar,' and he mad like crazy. He's a very tall guy with blue eyes, an Irishman, or an Italian—he's very white—but when he's coming to me he's like a red person. Very furious. The secretary is saying, 'Please, leave fast.' "

Tobón says that, a few weeks later, another agent came to Orlando Travel and told him that the investigation was finished. Tobón was raising money for a funeral, and the agent gave him sixty dollars as a contribution.

Tobón's manner is tranquil and kindly, but he likes to nurse a grievance. "Some people treat him like he's the Mother Teresa of Jackson Heights," Arturo-Ignacio Sánchez says. "But I'd rather have a pit bull attack me than be his enemy. A few years ago, there was bad blood between Tobón and a man who was running for political office in Queens. It was all this personalization of Colombian politics, and Orlando supported the man's opponent, who is native-born"—born in the United States, rather than in Colombia—"which isn't done. People come and ask Orlando, 'How should I vote?' When

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the man lost, the Colombian Consulate called Orlando and said, 'He lost because of you.' ”

The man who lost is a lawyer named William Salgado. From 1998 to 1999, he was the president of the Colombian Civic Center, which each July holds a festival in Flushing Meadows Corona Park. Tobón says that one year he attended the festival with two blind men, and began selling tickets to a raffle being held to raise money so that one of the men could have an operation. Tobón tried to enter the V.I.P. area, Salgado says, and was turned away. A year later, when Salgado was running for the New York State Assembly, he asked Tobón for his support. Tobón says that he told Salgado, "When I need your help, you throw me out. Why I help you now?" Salgado told me, "This guy at that point was my sworn enemy. I might have lost anyway—I was running against an established incumbent—but, if I'd had Tobón's support, who knows?" When Salgado ran again, in 2002, Tobón did finally support him, but he didn't win.

In addition to being tenacious, Tobón is artless, which leaves him prey to other people's ambitions. One of the screenplays that Rojas is writing concerns a period of two and a half years, when Tobón ran a public-access radio station, Radio Orquídea. The station had its premises in a house a few doors east of Orlando Travel. One of the people involved knew how to manipulate the device that controlled the station's signal.

"In the night, he give more power to the radio station," Tobón said. "We supposed to have very low power—it's only for Jackson Heights—but he fix it." People elsewhere in New York and in New Jersey and Connecticut, instead of hearing their own stations, heard Radio Orquídea. They complained, and the F.C.C. sent an inspector. In hopes of discouraging further trouble, Tobón announced that the F.C.C. had installed cameras to catch the person tampering with the signal. The next morning, he says, when he arrived at the station, the ceiling had been torn out by people looking for the cameras.

The station had other problems. One person took money to play records, another mentioned the names of businesses for cash. Eventually, Tobón closed the station. For a year after that, whenever anyone unfamiliar came into his office, he thought it was someone coming to arrest him. "Especially the people that looked American," he says. "Oh, my God."

Tobón was born in January of 1947, in Cisneros, "a very small town," he says, in northeastern Colombia. His father was a dentist, and he and his wife had three boys and a girl. When Tobón, the oldest child, was still very young, the family moved to Medellín, to escape the violence of the civil war, and from Medellín, where his father had trouble finding work, they moved to Bogotá. Tobón's parents separated then, and, to help support the family, Tobón went to work in the accounting department of

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his great-grandfather's soda company. (The company, Postobón, still exists, but the family no longer owns it. At lunch in Jackson Heights, Diego Rojas ordered me a can of Postobón apple soda.) The reports from the World's Fair in Flushing—"fantastic news about the new movies and radios and technologies," Tobón says—led him to the United States Consulate in Bogotá. An official recommended that he apply for a work visa, in case he wanted to stay. Tobón came to New York with five friends in February of 1968, and, because of the work visa, he had to register for the draft at the airport. (He was never summoned.) On the sidewalk outside the terminal, a man handed him a flyer offering work.

Tobón and one of his friends rented a room in a boarding house at Sixty-ninth Street and Roosevelt Avenue. The next morning, the landlord took them to the address on the flyer, the Swingline staple company. "We start to make stapling machines," Tobón says. Across from the rooming house was a restaurant, where Tobón found night work washing dishes. Weekends, he worked in the kitchen. For the first time in his life, he saw beer sold by the glass.

The Swingline factory was across the street from LaGuardia Community College, and there Tobón began taking night classes in accounting—he gave up dishwashing to do it. When he graduated, he went to work for the First National Bank of Chicago, in Manhattan. He began bringing his family to America: first his brother Edgar, who now lives in Miami; then his late mother, Emma; then his sister, Piedad, and his brother William, who owns a liquor store in Astoria. On scraps of paper, in the margins of books, in notebooks, Tobón wrote down the things that were happening to him and the people he met.

In 1985, he bought a house for the family, in Bellmore, on Long Island. At his mother's insistence, he listed Piedad as half owner. Later, at Piedad's urging, Tobón says, he signed the house over to her. She was impatient with his habit of giving things away to people in distress. He says that if he owned something she felt it should be the property of his family before it became someone else's.

Tobón's impulse to help people in distress derives from his mother's example. She died in 1990, in an Avianca plane crash on Long Island, returning from Colombia, where she had delivered a shipment of clothes for the poor. When the settlement arrived from the airline, Tobón says, Piedad asked him to give her his portion. Piedad wouldn't tell me what happened, but, according to Tobón, when he wouldn't give her the money she told him to leave. "She know I'm going to give it to somebody else," he said.

"Who did you give it to?" I asked.

"Oh, to different people," he said. "Very poor people."

Tobón still speaks to his sister, who now lives in Miami, but the last time he saw her, he says, was at the première of "María Full of Grace." After the movie opened, an editor from Simon & Schuster called him and asked if he had ever thought of writing a book about his experiences. With the help of a ghostwriter, Tobón assembled from his notes and journals "Jackson Heights Chronicles," a fictionalized account of his assimilation, in which he appears as Don Fernando, and which was published last year in Spanish and English editions. He said, "In a few months, I have the movie and the book. My customer come in like crazy since then."

Tobón's greatest apprehension is the thought of being alone. Years ago, he married a woman in Colombia, so that she could come to America, but they never lived together and, within a couple of years, she had divorced him and married someone else. He now lives in a two-bedroom apartment on Northern Boulevard with a young man named Eduardo Gomez, who is something like a son to him, and Eduardo's wife and infant daughter. Eduardo's mother was a seamstress in a factory in Manhattan, and his father was often out of

ORDINARY LIFE

Our life is ordinary,
I read in a crumpled paper
abandoned on a bench.
Our life is ordinary,
the philosophers told me.

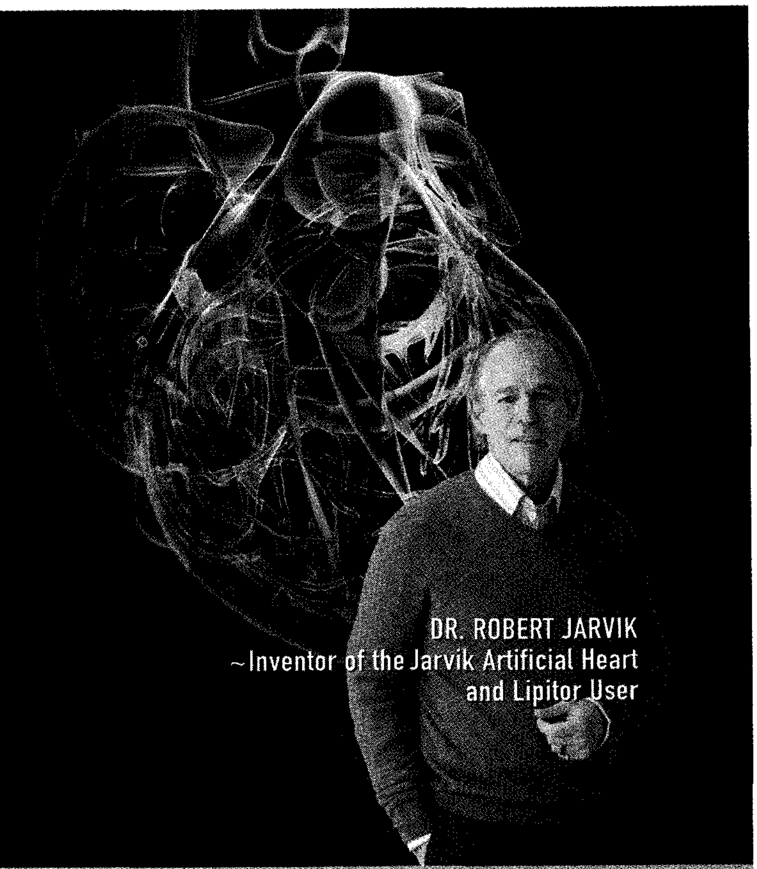
Ordinary life, ordinary days and cares,
a concert, a conversation,
strolls on the town's outskirts,
good news, bad—

but objects and thoughts
were unfinished somehow,
rough drafts.

Houses and trees
desired something more
and in summer green meadows
covered the volcanic planet
like an overcoat tossed upon the ocean.

Black cinemas crave light.
Forests breathe feverishly,
clouds sing softly,
a golden oriole prays for rain.
Ordinary life desires.

—*Adam Zagajewski*
(*Translated, from the Polish, by Clare Cavanagh.*)



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tablets

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LIPITOR is not for everyone. It is not for those with liver problems. And it is not for women who are nursing, pregnant or may become pregnant. If you take LIPITOR, tell your doctor if you feel any new muscle pain or weakness. This could be a sign of rare but serious muscle side effects. Tell your doctor about all medications you take. This may help avoid serious drug interactions. Your doctor should do blood tests to check your liver function before and during treatment and may adjust your dose. The most common side effects are gas, constipation, stomach pain and heartburn. They tend to be mild and often go away.

Please see additional important information on next page.

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WHO IS LIPITOR FOR?

Who can take LIPITOR:

- People who cannot lower their cholesterol enough with diet and exercise
- Adults and children over 10

Who should NOT take LIPITOR:

- Women who are pregnant, may be pregnant, or may become pregnant. LIPITOR may harm your unborn baby. If you become pregnant, stop LIPITOR and call your doctor right away.
- Women who are breast-feeding. LIPITOR can pass into your breast milk and may harm your baby.
- People with liver problems
- People allergic to anything in LIPITOR

BEFORE YOU START LIPITOR

Tell your doctor:

- About all medications you take, including prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, and herbal supplements
- If you have muscle aches or weakness
- If you drink more than 2 alcoholic drinks a day
- If you have diabetes or kidney problems
- If you have a thyroid problem

ABOUT LIPITOR

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LIPITOR can lower the risk of heart attack or stroke in patients who have risk factors for heart disease such as:

- age, smoking, high blood pressure, low HDL-C, heart disease in the family, *or*
- diabetes with risk factor such as eye problems, kidney problems, smoking, or high blood pressure

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF LIPITOR

Serious side effects in a small number of people:

- **Muscle problems** that can lead to kidney problems, including kidney failure. Your chance for muscle problems is higher if you take certain other medicines with LIPITOR.
- **Liver problems**. Your doctor may do blood tests to check your liver before you start LIPITOR and while you are taking it.

Symptoms of muscle or liver problems include:

- Unexplained muscle weakness or pain, especially if you have a fever or feel very tired
- Nausea, vomiting, or stomach pain
- Brown or dark-colored urine
- Feeling more tired than usual
- Your skin and the whites of your eyes turn yellow

If you have these symptoms, call your doctor right away.

The most common side effects of LIPITOR are:

- Headache
- Diarrhea, gas
- Rash
- Constipation
- Upset stomach and stomach pain
- Muscle and joint pain

Side effects are usually mild and may go away by themselves. Fewer than 3 people out of 100 stopped taking LIPITOR because of side effects.

HOW TO TAKE LIPITOR

Do:

- Take LIPITOR as prescribed by your doctor.
- Try to eat heart-healthy foods while you take LIPITOR.
- Take LIPITOR at any time of day, with or without food.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. But if it has been more than 12 hours since your missed dose, wait. Take the next dose at your regular time.

Don't:

- Do not change or stop your dose before talking to your doctor.
- Do not start new medicines before talking to your doctor.
- Do not give your LIPITOR to other people. It may harm them even if your problems are the same.
- Do not break the tablet.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

- Ask your doctor or health care provider.
- Talk to your pharmacist.
- Go to **www.lipitor.com** or call **1-888-LIPITOR**.

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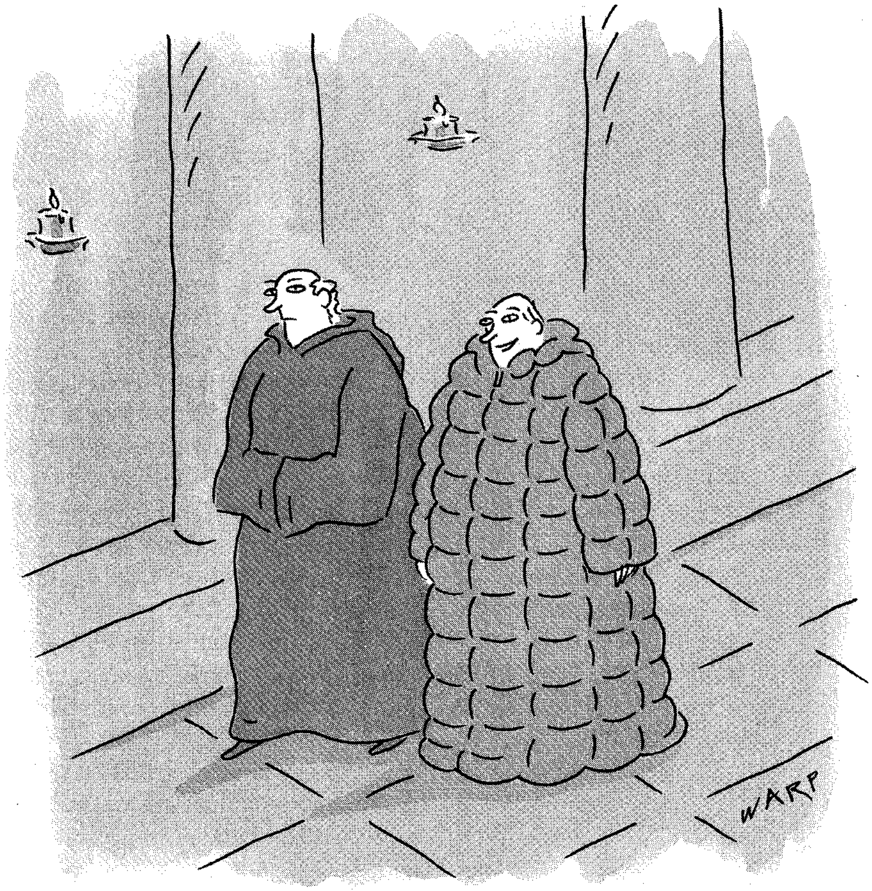

"L. L. Bean."

• •

work. When his mother fell sick, it became difficult for the family. As a teenager, Eduardo began helping Tobón at Orlando Travel and eventually moved into the spare bedroom in Tobón's apartment. Jenny Vargas, who sometimes answers the phone in the office, is the cousin of Eduardo's wife.

Tobón made flyers for the Miami woman's son. He put the boy's photograph on them and asked anyone who might have seen the boy to call him. No one did. The drug dealer in Colombia has given the police no more information. A body thrown in the Hudson might drift out to sea. It might be thrown into the river one year and not surface until the next. It might be dismembered in the turbulence raised by the passing of a tugboat or a freighter. After a few weeks, the woman went back to Miami. So far as Tobón was able to determine, the boy has not been found.

In August, Tobón went to Colombia for two weeks. He is the founder of the Emma Cárdenas Foundation, named for his mother, in her home town of Yarumal, near Medellín, which distributes clothes and schoolbooks, and is building a school in Cali. He made the trip in part to see how the work was going. A few days before he left, Tobón, Rojas, Palacios, and I went to lunch at a Colombian restaurant two blocks from Orlando Travel. Tobón's celebrity is such that walking on the street is complicated. His pace is stately, and the three of us kept getting ahead of him. Cars sometimes pull up to the curb, and the drivers offer to take him where he is going. In addition, people kept stopping him, some to say hello and some to ask advice. I felt as if I were walking with a child who was constantly drawn to the displays in the store windows. Once, when I turned to see what was keeping him, I saw him standing between two men. He had his arms around them and he was smiling, and a third man was taking their photograph. ♦

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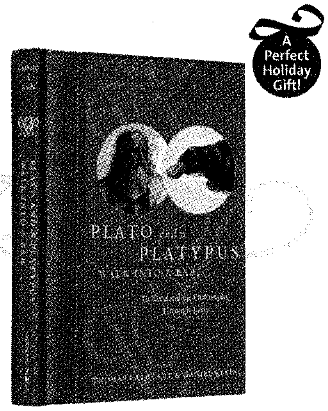

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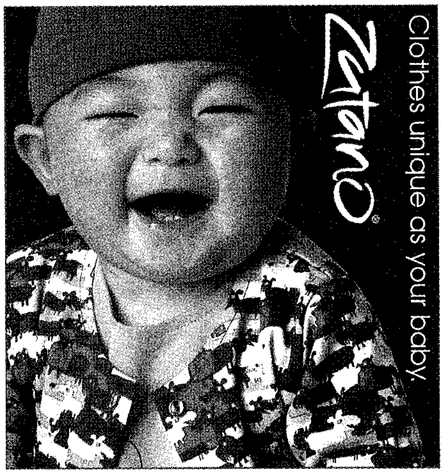
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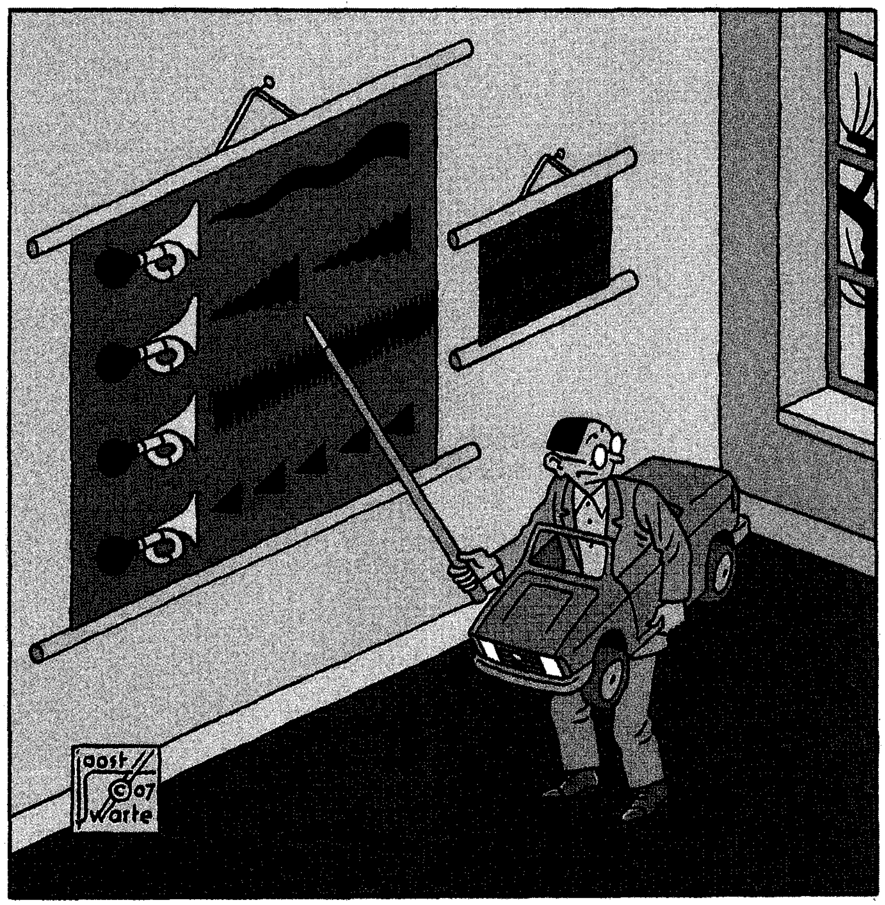
LETTER FROM CHINA

WHEELS OF FORTUNE

The People's Republic learns to drive.

BY PETER HESSLER

The first accident wasn't my fault. I had rented a Volkswagen Jetta and driven to my weekend home in Sancha, a village north of Beijing. I parked at the end of the road, where the pavement widens into an empty lot. It's impossible to drive within Sancha; like virtually all Chinese villages, it was built before anybody had cars, and homes are linked by narrow footpaths.



Among Chinese drivers, reflexive honking has evolved into a kind of language.

About an hour after I arrived, my neighbor asked me to move the car, because the villagers were about to mix cement in the lot. That day, Leslie, my wife, and I were both on our computers, trying to do some writing.

"I can move it if you want," my neighbor said. His name is Wei Ziqi, and he had recently completed a driving course and received his license. It was his proudest achievement—he was one of the first in the village to learn to drive. I handed him the keys and sat back down at my computer. Half an hour later, he returned and stood in the doorway silently. I asked if everything was all right.

"There's a problem with the car," he said slowly. He was smiling, but it was a tight Chinese grin of embarrassment, the kind of expression that makes your pulse quicken.

"What kind of problem?" I said.

"I think you should come see it."

In the lot, a couple of villagers were staring at the car; they were grinning, too. The front bumper had been knocked completely off. It lay on the road, leaving the Jetta's grille gaping, like a child who's lost three teeth and can't stop smiling. Why did everybody look so goddam happy?

"I forgot about the front end," Wei Ziqi said.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

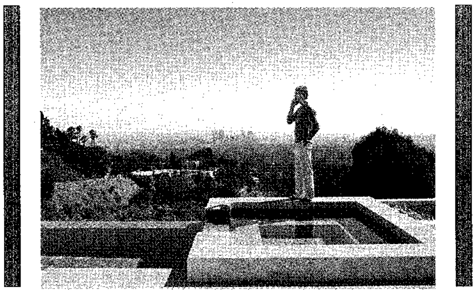
"I'm not used to driving something with a front end," he said. "During my course, we only drove Liberation trucks. They were flat in front."

I had parked the Jetta parallel to a wall, and he had backed up and turned the wheel sharply, not realizing that the front end would swing in the opposite direction. I knelt down and inspected the bumper—it was hopelessly bent.

He got some wire and tied the bumper to the front end. He offered repeatedly to pay for it, but I told him not to worry; I'd deal with the rental company. The next day, I set off to return the car.

Driving is something that I take very seriously. When I turned sixteen, I was told that handling an automobile is a privilege and a responsibility, and I still get nervous thinking about the day that my mother drove me to the Wilkes Boulevard United Methodist Church, in Columbia, Missouri, to take my first driving exam. The state's Division of Motor Vehicles rented office space in the building, and the exam began and ended in the church parking lot. In mid-Missouri, it was widely known that when it came to judging sixteen-year-old males the D.M.V. was even tougher than the Methodists. They failed boys for not checking the blind spot, for running yellow lights, for tiny adjustments on parallel parking. There were rumors that any boy who was visibly confident would flunk—if you believed that you were predestined for a license, then the folks at the Wilkes Boulevard United Methodist Church would prove otherwise. I took the test in my family's Dodge Caravan, and afterward the examiner gave me a stern speech. It began with the statement "You're lucky we don't professionally evaluate you," and ended with "I hope I don't see you in the hospital someday." Between these remarks, the man acknowledged that I had passed by the barest of margins, and that was all that mattered. There was no purgatory at the D.M.V. You either failed or you passed, and success meant

JOOST SWARTE



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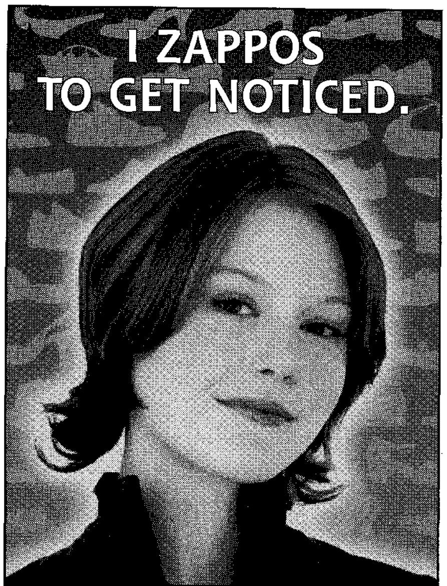

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that, as long as you avoided trouble and kept up the paperwork, you'd never have to take another driving exam in the state of Missouri.

After moving to Beijing, I was surprised that my Missouri license had some currency in the People's Republic. The country was in the early stages of an auto boom; Beijing alone now registers almost a thousand new drivers every day. All Chinese applicants are required to have a medical checkup, take a written exam, complete a technical course, and then pass two driving tests. But the process has been pared down for any foreigner who already has certification from his home country. These days, a driver from overseas takes only a written exam, but in 2001, when I applied, I had to pass a special foreigner's road test. The examiner was in his mid-forties, and he wore white cotton driving gloves with tobacco stains on the fingers. He lit up a Red Pagoda Mountain cigarette as soon as I got in the car. It was a Volkswagen Santana, the nation's most popular passenger vehicle at the time.

"Start the car," the man said, and I turned the key. "Drive forward," he said.

We were north of the city, in a neighborhood that had been cleared of all traffic—no cars, no bikes, no pedestrians. It was the most peaceful street I'd ever seen in the capital, and I wish I could have savored it. But after fifty yards the examiner spoke again. "Pull over," he said. "Turn off the car."

The Santana fell silent; the man filled out forms, his pen moving efficiently. He had barely burned through the tip of his Red Pagoda Mountain. "Is that all?" I said.

"That's it," the man said. He asked me where I had learned Chinese, and we chatted for a while. One of the last things he said to me was "You're a very good driver."

That summer, I began renting cars from a company in southeastern Beijing. The car-rental industry was a new one; five years earlier, almost nobody in the capital would have thought of renting an automobile for a weekend trip. But now my local company had a fleet of about fifty vehicles, mostly Chinese-made Jettas and Santanas. Usually, I rented a Jetta, which cost twenty-five dollars per day and involved an enormous amount of paperwork. The most elaborate part of the process was a survey of the car's exterior, led by an employee, who recorded dents and scratches on a diagram. This inspection often took a while—the Jetta is a small automobile, but Beijing traffic made the most of the limited canvas. After documenting the damage, the employee turned the key in the ignition and showed me the gas gauge. Sometimes it was half full; sometimes there was a quarter tank. Sometimes he studied it and announced, "Three-eighths." It was my responsibility to return the car with exactly the same amount of fuel. One day, I decided to make a contribution to the fledgling industry.

"You should rent cars with a full tank, and then require the customer to bring it back full," I said. "That's how rental companies do it in America."

"That would never work here," said the employee who usually handled my rental, whom I'll call Mr. Liu. He was a big man with thinning hair that flopped loosely over a wide forehead; he always seemed to be in a good mood. He sat with two other men in the front office, where they smoked cigarettes as if it were a competition. The room was so full of smoke that I could hardly read the company evaluation sign that hung on the wall:

> Customer Satisfaction Rating: 90%
> Efficiency Rating: 97%
> Appropriate Service Diction Rating: 98%
> Service Attitude Rating: 99%

"That might work in America, but it wouldn't work here," Mr. Liu continued. "People in China would return the car empty."

"Then you charge them a lot extra to refill it," I said. "They'll learn."

"You don't understand Chinese people!" Mr. Liu said, laughing, and the other men nodded. As a foreigner, I often heard that statement, and it had a way of ending discussion. The Chinese people had invented the compass, silk, paper, gunpowder, the seismoscope; they had sailed to Africa in the fifteenth century; they had built the Great Wall; in the past decade they had expanded their economy at a rate never before seen in the developing world. They could return a rental car with exactly three-eighths of a tank of gas, but filling it was apparently beyond the realm of possibility. Finally, I dropped the subject. There was no way to argue with somebody as friendly as Mr. Liu.

He seemed especially cheerful when I

returned the Jetta with the ruined bumper. In the past, I had brought back cars with new dents; this was inevitable in a city with more than two million cars, most of them handled by rookies. But I had never done any serious damage, and Mr. Liu's eyes grew wide when he saw the Jetta. "Waah!" he said. "How did you do that?"

"I didn't." I described Wei Ziqi's lack of experience with hooded cars, and Mr. Liu looked confused; the more I expanded on this topic, the blanker his expression became. At last, I abandoned the front end—I offered to pay for the bumper.

"*Mei wenti!*" Mr. Liu said, smiling. "No problem! We have insurance! You just need to write an accident report. Do you have your chop?"

I told Mr. Liu that my chop—an official stamp registered to one's work unit, in my case *The New Yorker*—was at home.

"No problem! Just bring it next time." He opened a drawer and pulled out a stack of papers; each was blank except for a red stamp. Mr. Liu rifled through the pile, selected one, and laid it in front of me. The chop read, "U.S.-China Tractor Association."

"What's this?" I said.

"It doesn't matter," he said. "They had an accident, but they didn't have their chop, so they used somebody else's. Then they brought this page to replace it. Now you can write your report on their page, and next time bring a piece of paper with your chop, so the next person can use it. Understand?"

I didn't—he had to explain this arrangement three times. It dawned on me that the wrecked bumper, which had never been my fault, and in a sense wasn't Wei Ziqi's fault, either, because of the unexpected front end, would now be blamed on the U.S.-China Tractor Association. "But you shouldn't say it happened in the countryside," Mr. Liu said. "That's too complicated. Just say you had an accident in our parking lot."

He wrote out a sample report and Leslie copied it, because her written Chinese was much better than mine. I signed my name across the tractor chop. The next time I rented a car, Mr. Liu told me that the insurance had covered everything. He never hassled me about bringing in the paper with my chop, and I decided to leave it at that—I was an old customer, as Mr. Liu liked to say.

When you live in China as a foreigner, there are two critical moments of recognition. The first occurs immediately upon arrival, when you are confronted with your own ignorance. Language, customs, history—all of it

"*Old yoga injury.*"

SWANN

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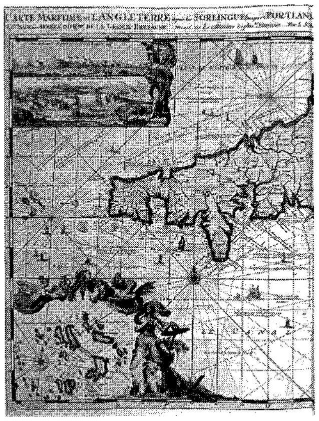
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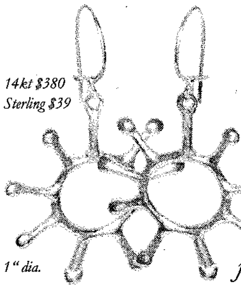

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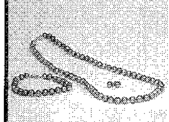
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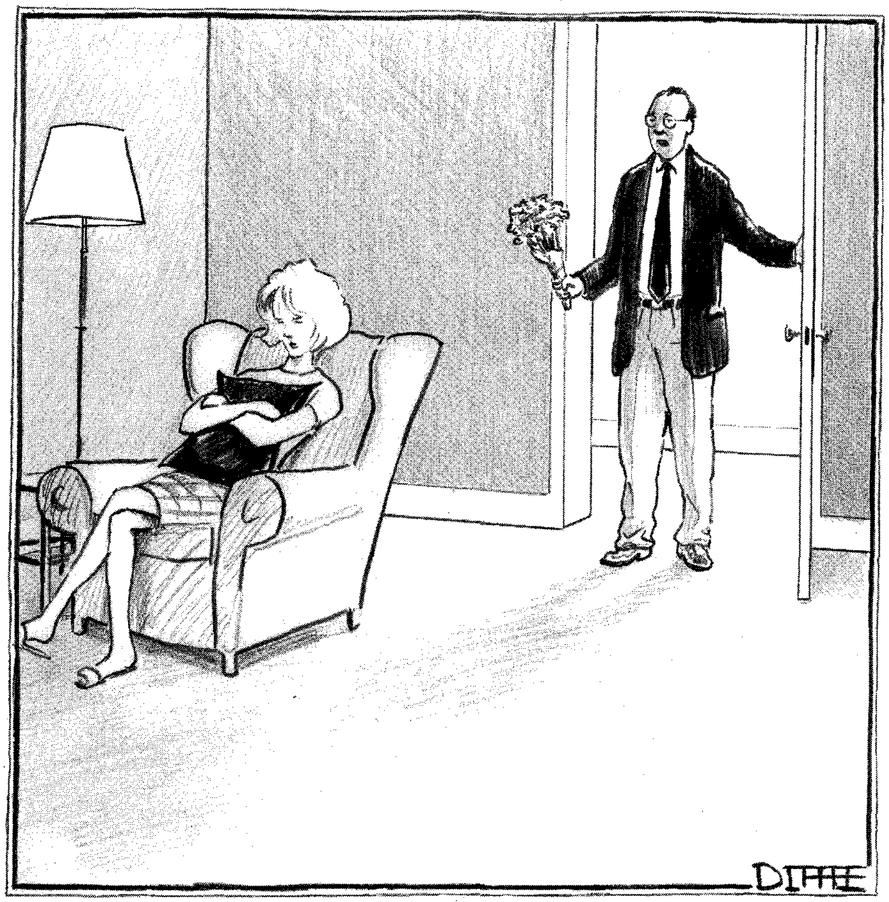

"Honey, I got you some flowers to complain about."

• •

has to be learned, and the task seems insurmountable. Then, just as you begin to catch on, you realize that everybody else feels pretty much the same way. The place changes too fast; nobody in China has the luxury of being confident in his knowledge. Who shows a peasant how to find a factory job? How does a former Maoist learn to start a business? Who has the slightest clue how to run a car-rental agency? Everything is figured out on the fly; the people are masters of improvisation. This second moment of recognition is even more frightening than the first. Awareness of your own ignorance is a lonely feeling, but there's little consolation in sharing it with 1.3 billion neighbors.

On the road, it's particularly horrifying. China still doesn't have many drivers—there are only twenty-eight automobiles per every thousand people, which is about the same rate that the United States had in 1915. But a 2004 World Health Organization report found that China, while having only three per cent of the world's vehicles, accounted for twenty-one per cent of its traffic fatalities. Last year, eighty-nine thousand people died in accidents. It's a nation of new drivers, and the transition has been so rapid that many road patterns come directly from pedestrian life—people drive the way they walk. They like to move in packs, and they tailgate whenever possible. They rarely use turn signals. If they miss an exit on a highway, they simply pull onto the shoulder, shift into reverse, and get it right the second time. After years of long queues, Chinese people have learned to be ruthless about cutting in line, an instinct that is disastrous in traffic jams. Toll booths are hazardous for the same reason. Drivers rarely check their rearview mirrors, perhaps because they never use such an instrument when they travel on foot or by bicycle. Windshield wipers are considered a distraction, and so are headlights.

In fact, the use of headlights was banned in Beijing until the mid-eighties, when Chinese officials began going overseas in increasing numbers. These trips were encouraged by governments in Europe and the United States, in the hope that glimpses of democracy would encourage China's leaders to rethink their policies. In 1983, Chen Xitong, the mayor of Beijing, made one such visit to New York. During his meetings with Mayor Ed Koch, Chen made a crucial observation: Manhattan drivers turn on their lights at night. When Chen returned to China, he decreed that Beijing motorists do the same. It's unclear what political conclusions Chen drew from his encounters with American democracy—the man ended up in prison for corruption—but at least he did his part for traffic safety. Nevertheless, there's enough debate about headlight use to merit a question on the written driving exam:

> 278. During the evening, a driver should
> (a) turn on the brights.
> (b) turn on the normal lights.
> (c) turn off the lights.

Recently, I picked up a study booklet for the exam. It consisted of four hundred and twenty-nine multiple-choice questions and two hundred and fifty-six true-false queries, any of which might appear on the test. Often, these questions successfully captured the spirit of the road ("True or False: In a taxi, it's fine to carry a small amount of explosive material"), but I wasn't convinced that they helped people learn to drive correctly. After carefully studying the booklet, though, I realized that it was descriptive rather than prescriptive. It didn't teach people how to drive; it taught you how people drove:

> 77. When overtaking another car, a driver should pass
> (a) on the left.
> (b) on the right.
> (c) wherever, depending on the situation.
>
> 354. If you are driving toward a big puddle and there are pedestrians next to the water, you should
> (a) accelerate.
> (b) slow down and make sure that the water does not splash them.
> (c) continue at the same speed straight through the puddle.
>
> 80. If, while preparing to pass a car, you notice that it is turning left, making a U-turn, or passing another vehicle, you should
> (a) pass on the right.
> (b) not pass.
> (c) honk, accelerate, and pass on the left.

Lots of answers involved honking. In Chinese automobiles, the horn is

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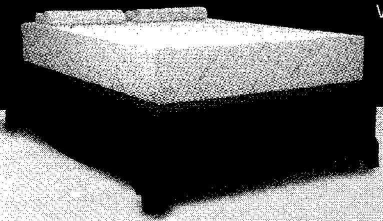

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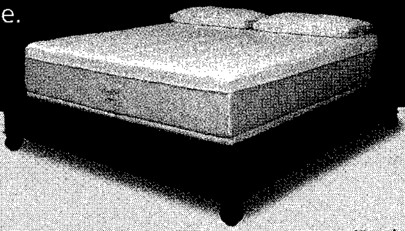

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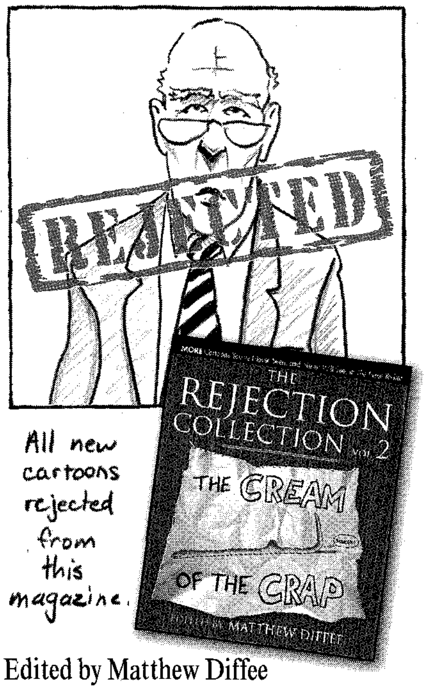

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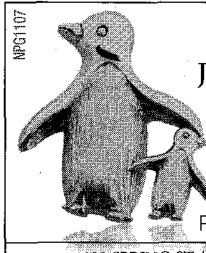

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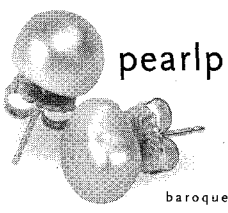

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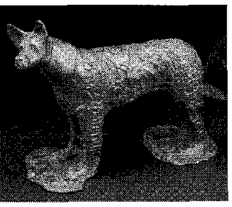

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essentially neurological—it channels the driver's reflexes. People honk constantly, and at first all horns sound the same, but over time you learn to distinguish variations and interpret them correctly. In this sense, honking is as complicated as the language. Spoken Chinese is tonal, which means that a single syllable can have different meanings depending on whether it is flat, rising, falling and rising, or falling sharply. Similarly, a Chinese horn is capable of at least ten distinct meanings. A solid *hoooooonnnnnk* is intended to attract attention. A double sound—*hoooonnnnnk, hoooonnnnnk*—indicates irritation. There's a particularly long *hoooooooooonnnnnnnnnnnk* that means the driver is stuck in traffic, has exhausted curb-sneaking options, and would like everybody else on the road to disappear. A responding *hoooooooooooooonnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnk* proves that they aren't going anywhere. There's a stuttering, staggering *honk honk hnk hnk hnk hnk hnk* that represents pure panic. There's the afterthought honk—the one that rookie drivers make if they are too slow to hit the button before a situation resolves itself. And there's a short, simple honk that says, "My hands are still on the wheel, and this horn continues to serve as an extension of my nervous system." Other honks can be found on the exam:

353. When passing an elderly person or a child, you should
(a) slow down and make sure you pass safely.
(b) continue at the same speed.
(c) honk the horn to tell them to watch out.

269. When you enter a tunnel, you should
(a) honk and accelerate.
(b) slow down and turn on your lights.
(c) honk and maintain speed.

355. When driving through a residential area, you should
(a) honk like normal.
(b) honk more than normal, in order to alert residents.
(c) avoid honking, in order to avoid disturbing residents.

The second accident wasn't my fault, either. I was driving in the countryside, and a dog darted out from behind a house and lunged at my Jetta. This is a common problem; dogs, like everybody else in China, aren't quite accustomed to having automobiles around. I swerved, but it was too late: the dog thudded against the front of the car. When Leslie and I returned the Jetta, the three men were smoking cigarettes beside the company evaluation sign. None of the numbers had changed in the year and a half since my last accident—"Appropriate Service Diction Rating" was holding steady at 98 per cent. Mr. Liu inspected the Jetta and noted cheerfully that the plastic cover for the right signal light had been smashed. He asked what I had hit.

"A dog," I said.

"*Gou mei wenti?*" he said. "The dog didn't have a problem, did it?"

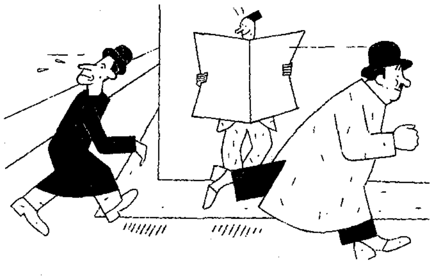
"The dog had a problem," I said. "It died."

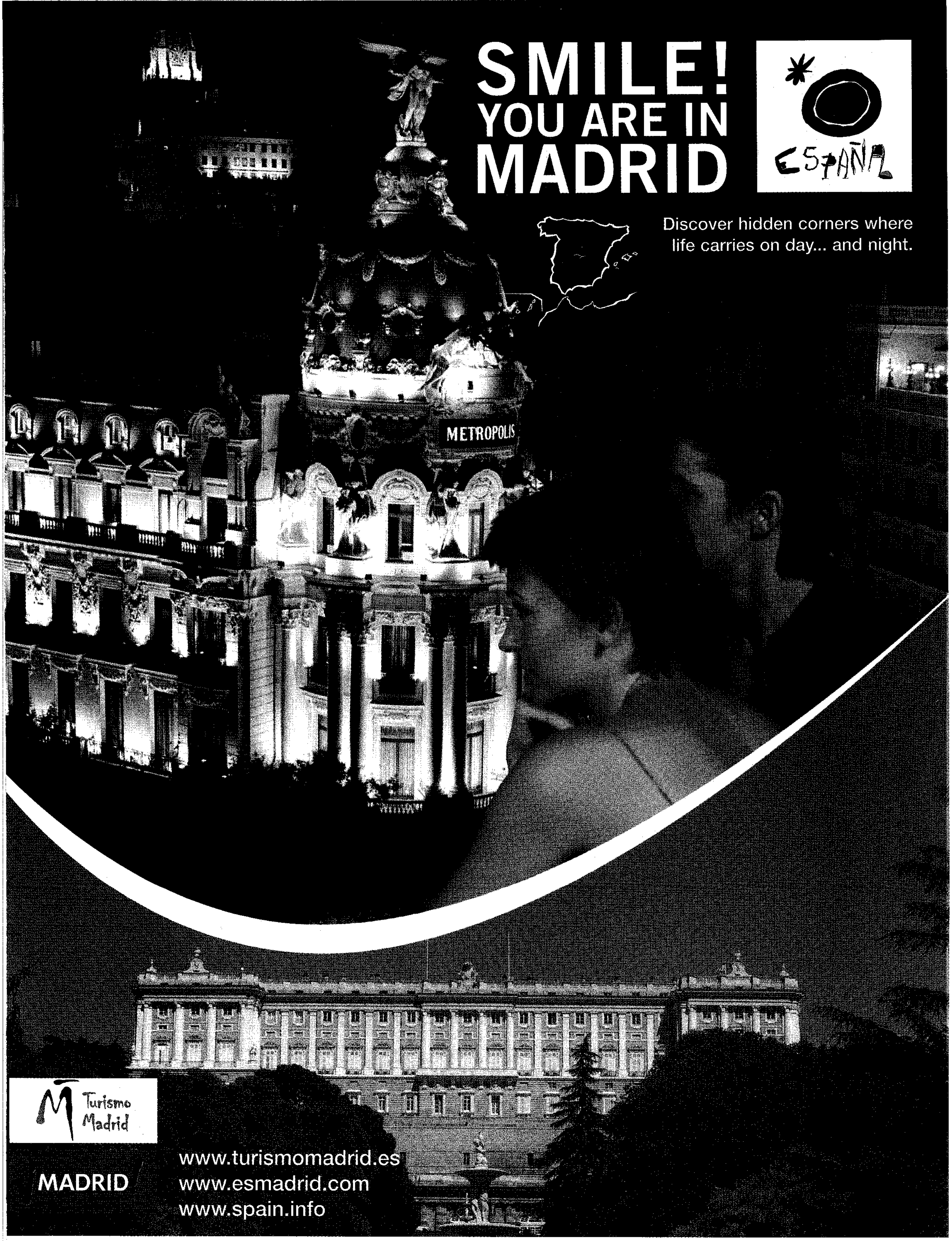
Mr. Liu's smile got bigger. "Did you eat it?"

I couldn't tell if Mr. Liu was joking—he was a dog owner himself, and I had seen him playing with his pet in the office. "It wasn't that kind of dog," I said. "It was one of those tiny little dogs."

"Well, sometimes if a driver hits a big dog he just throws it in the trunk, takes it home, and cooks it," he said. He charged us twelve dollars for a new signal-light cover—it was too minor for the insurance, and there was no need to call in the U.S.-China Tractor Association.

Every Chinese applicant for a license must enroll in a certified course, at his own expense, and he must spend at least fifty-eight hours in training. This suggests a high degree of standardization, but much depends on the instructor, who is called a *jiaolian*, or "coach." Often, coaches have developed their own theories and regimens, like the martial-arts masters of old. Wei Ziqi's coach disdained front-end vehicles, and he also forced his students to begin every maneuver in second gear. It was more challenging, he said; first gear

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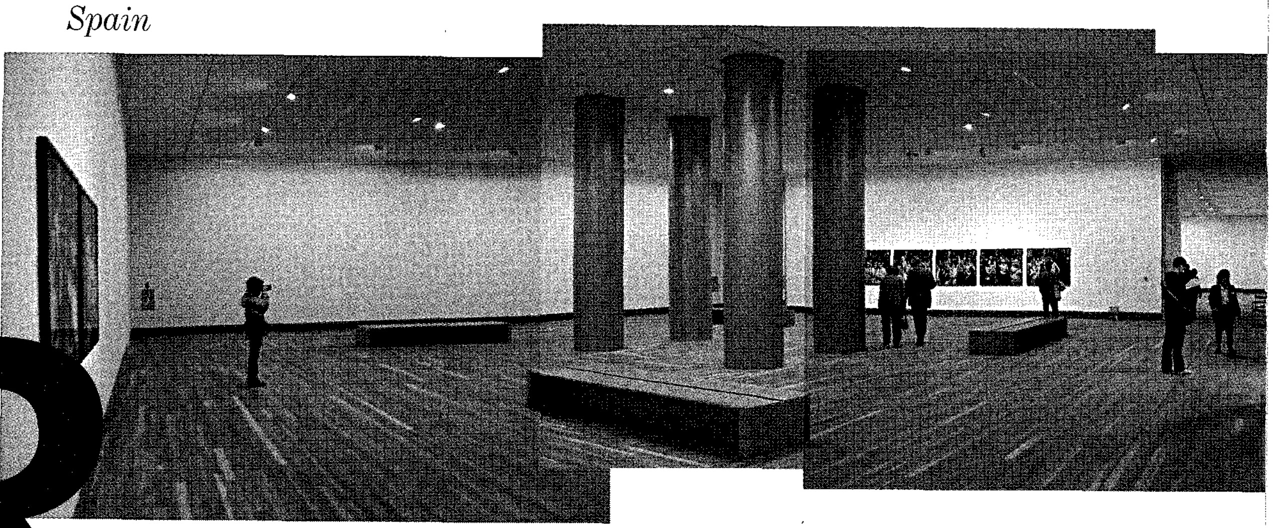

Rel in Madrid

Spain's lively, cosmopolitan capital has a well-earned reputation for offering some of Europe's best night life and cuisine. Revelers from around the world come to celebrate in style at the city's avant-garde dance clubs, intimate bars, chic restaurants, and romantic cafés.

The customary way to kick off evening festivities is with cocktails and tapas, small dishes of olives, cheese, sausages, and other specialties that sate the appetite before notoriously nocturnal Madrileños eat dinner. Some of Madrid's most popular tapas restaurants are along Calle Cava Baja just south of the Plaza Mayor, where **Casa Lucas** and **Txakoli** serve these typical treats.

After barhopping, friends meet for a leisurely dinner, often not until after 9 P.M. Choosing a restaurant may be one of the tougher decisions of the evening, but a few notable options are **Balzac**, which offers a modern twist on Mediterranean dishes, **Pan de Lujo**, another contemporary hotspot, and **Casa Lucio**, a local favorite known for its traditional Spanish cuisine.

Besides its vibrant dining scene, Madrid offers a wide range of cultural activities. The prestigious **Teatro Real** hosts concerts and operas throughout the year, and **La Plaza de Toros de Las Ventas**, Madrid's legendary bullring, is also a popular venue for rock concerts and shows.

As dinner winds down and performances end, the citywide party moves into high gear. Crowds gather at clubs around midnight, and everyone dresses up to dance until dawn—locals rarely wear jeans or sneakers to bars and clubs. The grand finale to a night on the town is the typical breakfast ritual: thick, hot chocolate and sweet, fried *churros.*

By day, Madrid has exceptional museums to explore. This fall, the **Prado Museum** unveiled its grand new extension, nearly doubling its size. Designed by architect Rafael Moneo, the enlarged Prado features new galleries and even additional buildings that have been incorporated into the museum, including the restored Cloister of the Jerónimos. The Prado is inaugurating the new space with an exhibition featuring nineteenth-century Spanish artists such as Goya, Madrazo, and Sorolla, on view through April 24th.

Also along the Paseo del Prado, the **Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum** has two of the top private collections of twentieth-century art, with works by Titian, Kandinsky, and Rothko among other museum highlights. Completing Madrid's "Golden Triangle of Art," the **Reina Sofia National Art Museum** specializes in Spanish works—Picasso's "Guernica" is part of the permanent collection. Day or night, visitors can revel in the treasures of this multicultural city.

PHOTOS: NEW EXTENSION OF THE PRADO MUSEUM ©ARQTIPO
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would only make them lazy. Another woman I know had a coach who forbade the use of turn signals, because they distracted other drivers. When Leslie decided to learn to use a stick shift, she hired a private coach in Beijing. On the first lesson, the man introduced himself, sat in the passenger seat, and adjusted the rearview mirror so that it faced him.

"How am I going to see what's behind me?" Leslie asked.

"I'll tell you what's behind you," the coach said. He was like the martial-arts guru who blindfolds his pupil: trust is the first step toward mastery.

Recently, I went to observe some courses at the Public Safety Driving School in the southeastern city of Lishui. Local car ownership was still low—only twenty households out of every thousand had bought a car within the past six months. But that was twice the previous year's rate, and the city's factory economy was in the middle of a boom. The driving school was busy, and classes moved through three stages: the parking range, the driving range, and the road.

One afternoon, I watched six students embark on their first day. An instructor called Coach Tang began by raising the hood of a red Santana. He pointed out the engine, the radiator, the battery. He showed them how to unscrew the gas cap. The door was next—the students practiced opening and closing it. Then he identified the panel instruments and the pedals. The students circled the Santana warily, fiddling with parts, like the blind men and the elephant. Finally, after an hour, they were allowed to enter the vehicle. Each of them sat in the driver's seat, where they shifted repeatedly from first to fifth gear, with the engine off. Watching this made me wince, and after a while I said to Coach Tang, "Isn't that bad for the car?"

"No," he said. "It's fine."

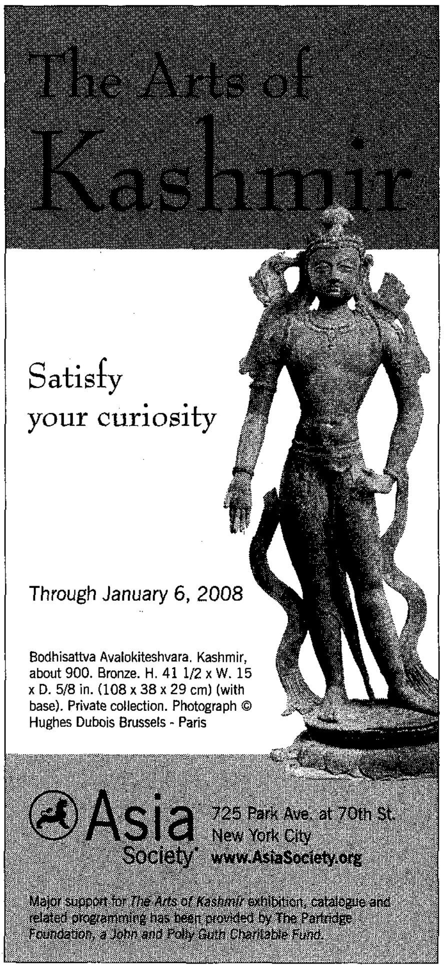
"I think it might be bad if the motor's off," I said.

"It's completely fine," Coach Tang said. "We do it all the time." In China, instructors of any type are traditionally respected without question, and I decided to keep my mouth shut. But it wasn't always easy. For the next step, the students learned to use the clutch by setting the parking brake, starting the engine, shifting into first gear, and then releasing the clutch while adding gas. The motor whined against the force of the brake; the torque dipped the front end up and down. By the end of the day, you could have fried an egg on the Santana's hood, and my palms began to sweat every time another driver gunned the engine.

Nobody was allowed to operate the vehicle until the second day of class. There were four men and two women, and all of them were younger than forty. Each had paid more than three hundred dollars for the course—a lot of money in a city where the monthly minimum wage was roughly sixty-five dollars. Only one person came from a household that currently owned an automobile. The others told me that someday they might buy one, and the university students—there were four of them—believed that a driver's license would look good on a résumé. "It's something you should be able to do, like swimming," a student named Wang Yanheng told me. "In the future, so many people in China are going to have cars." He was a senior, majoring in information technology. The one person from a home with automobiles (three) was a nineteen-year-old sociology major whose father owned a plastics factory. When I asked what the factory produced, the woman ran a finger along the rubber lining of the Santana's window. "This is one of the things we make," she said.

The students spent ten days on the parking range, and during that time they performed exactly three movements: a ninety-degree turn into a parking spot, the same maneuver in reverse, and parallel parking. Every day, for as many as six hours, they practiced these turns over and over. Like any good martial-arts master, Coach Tang was strict. "You must have forgotten your brain today!" he yelled, when a student brushed against a pole. "Don't hold the gearshift loosely like that!" he shouted at another. "If you do, your father will curse you!" Sometimes he slapped a student's hand.

The next step was the driving range, where the skill set became more demanding. Drivers were required to stop within twenty-five centimetres of a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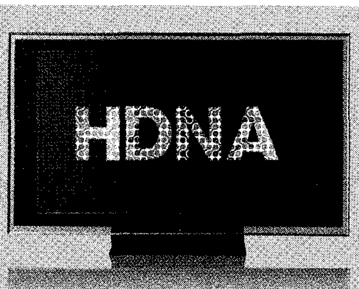

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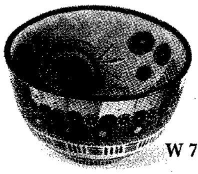

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painted line, and they guided the car through an obstacle course of tight turns. The final skill was the "single-plank bridge"—a concrete riser, a foot high and only slightly wider than a tire. Students had to aim the car perfectly, so that two wheels perched atop the riser—first the left tires, then the right. If a single wheel slipped, they failed the exam. The students spent most of their ten days practicing the single-plank bridge, and I asked a coach why it was so important. "Because it's very difficult," he said.

"Right, I understand that," I said. "But when is it useful on the road?"

"Well, if you're crossing a bridge with a hole, and there's only one place where the tires can go, then it's important to be able to do this."

The Chinese have fantastic driving imaginations—the written exam was full of situations like this. They seemed ridiculously unlikely, but the level of detail was such that I suspected it must have happened to somebody, somewhere:

> 279. If your car breaks down atop the tracks of a railroad crossing, you should
> (a) abandon it there.
> (b) find some way to move it immediately.
> (c) leave it there temporarily until you can get somebody to repair it.

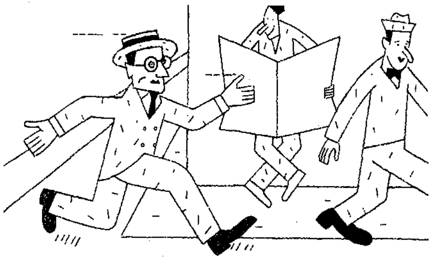
The course ended with a week and a half on the road, and I accompanied another class on its final day. With the coach in the passenger seat, students took turns driving along a two-lane rural road. There were certain movements they had to perform: shift to fifth, downshift to first, make a U-turn, stop at the imitation traffic light. They had been instructed to honk whenever they pulled out, or made a turn, or encountered anything in the road. They honked at cars, tractors, and donkey carts. They honked at every single pedestrian. Sometimes they passed another car from the driving school, and then both vehicles would honk happily, as if greeting an old friend. At noon, the class had lunch at a local restaurant, where everybody drank beer, including the coach, and then they continued driving. One student told me that a day earlier they got so drunk that they had to cancel the afternoon class.

Throughout the course, there had been no variables, no emphasis on responding to situations. Instead, students learned and rehearsed a small number of set pieces, which they would later combine and apply to actual city driving. It reminded me of how Chinese schoolchildren learn to write: they begin with specific strokes, copying them over and over, and then they combine these into characters, which are also written repeatedly. In China, repetition is the cornerstone of education, and virtually every new skill is approached in this manner. It's one reason that the Chinese have been far more successful at building assembly-line factories than at innovation.

It also explains many of the problems with driving in China. On the final day of class, a student begged me to let him drive my rental car back to the road range, for more practice. In a moment of extremely poor judgment, I agreed, and those turned out to be the most terrifying seven miles I had ever experienced in China. Twice I had to yell to keep him from passing on blind turns; another time, I grabbed the wheel to prevent him from veering into a car. He never checked the rearview mirror; he honked at everything that moved. The absolute lack of turn signals was the least of our problems. He came within inches of hitting a parked tractor, and he almost nailed a cement wall. When we finally made it to the range, I could have fallen on my knees and kissed the single-plank bridge.

Foreigners in Beijing often said to me, "I can't believe you're driving in this country." To which I responded, "I can't believe you get into cabs and buses driven by graduates of Chinese driving courses." On the road, everybody was lost—*une génération perdue*—but it felt better to be the one behind the wheel.

I had nothing to do with the third accident. I couldn't even drive—I had broken my left kneecap, and the Jetta that we had rented was standard transmis-



sion. Despite having served as a blindfolded acolyte of a local driving master, Leslie still didn't feel comfortable behind the wheel, and one afternoon she asked me to accompany her on some errands. I sat in the back, my broken leg propped up, giving advice every time she stalled. ("More gas!") It was snowing; traffic was miserable; we spent two hours hustling in and out of shops. After the last stop, Leslie turned the key and the Jetta lurched straight ahead into a brick wall.

I said, "Use the clutch."

There had been a distinct crunching sound, but we didn't check the car; by now, we were desperate to get home. Near the Lama Temple, as we waited to make the last left turn of the day, we were hit by another car. The driver backed into our side and then pulled away. There wasn't time to fumble with my crutches, so I hopped out on my good leg. Fortunately, traffic was backed up, and I caught him in about seven hops. I pounded on the window. "You hit my car!"

The driver looked up, surprised: a one-legged foreigner, hopping mad and smacking the glass. He stepped out and apologized, saying that he hadn't felt the impact. Together, we inspected the Jetta—fresh dent above the left rear wheel. The man said, "I'll give you a hundred." That was about thirteen dollars.

In China, after a minor accident people usually settle the matter on the street, in cash. This routine has become a standard part of life—once, I saw two small children playing a game in which they repeatedly rammed their bikes and shouted, "*Pei qian! Pei qian!*"—"Compensate! Compensate!"

Leslie used her cell phone to call the rental company. Mr. Liu didn't sound the least bit surprised to hear that we'd had another accident. All he said was "Ask for two hundred."

"That's too much," the other driver said. "This is really minor."

"It's not our decision."

"Well, then, we'll have to call the police," he said, but it was clear that he didn't want to do this. A dozen bystanders had gathered around the cars, which were parked in the middle of the snowy street. With Chinese accidents, the crowd is more like a jury than an audience, and a middle-aged

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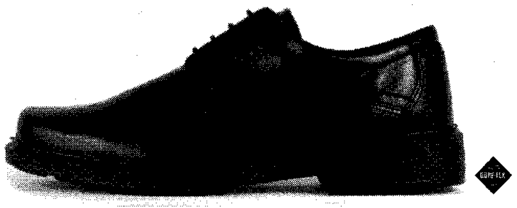

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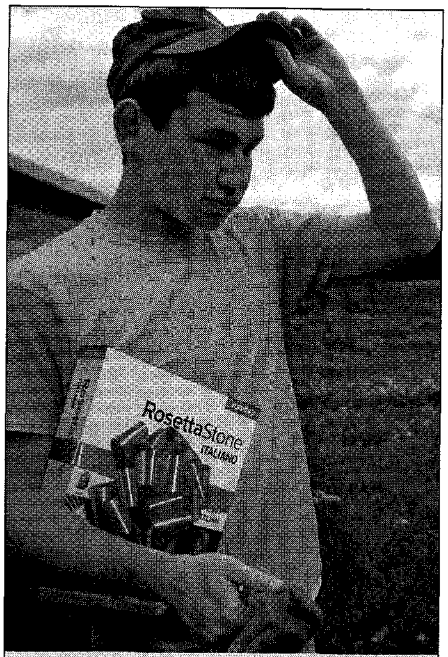

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woman bent over to inspect the dent. She stood up and announced, "A hundred is enough."

"What do you have to do with it?" Leslie snapped. "You can't even drive!"

That must have been correct, because the woman shut up. But the driver refused to pay two hundred. "Should we accept one-fifty?" Leslie asked me, in English. Lao-tzu said it best: A man standing on crutches in the snow will not bargain long over a dent to a crappy Jetta rental. Later that day, Leslie returned the car and the one-fifty in cash. Mr. Liu noticed that another light cover had been broken when she hit the brick wall. He said, happily, "What did you kill this time?" When I hit the dog, the same cover was twelve dollars; this time, he asked for only three. It must have been a special price because we did so well at the Lama Temple.

The fourth accident was entirely my fault. It was my last day in China, my last Jetta—the next morning I had a one-way ticket to Honolulu. On my way to return the car, I got stuck in a terrible traffic jam, and wailing horns filled the air—these were the honks that mean, "Let me out of here!" In front, a taxi-driver saw an opening and lurched ahead; I lurched after him; he stopped short; I didn't.

We got out. I took a look and winced: dents on both sides. "A hundred," I said.

"Are you kidding?" the man yelled. "This is at least two hundred!"

Suddenly, I felt extremely tired. Ten years in China, six years of driving, more honks than the Tower of Babel—"Let me out of here!" The man jabbered angrily, talking about how long it takes to fix a dented bumper, but I couldn't think of any response. "A hundred," I said again.

A crowd gathered, and the cabbie began to play to the jury—it was a bad dent; he worked long days; repairs took time. A tiny old woman stepped forward and touched his arm. "Take the money," she said softly. The cabbie looked down at her—she couldn't have been more than five feet tall—and fell silent. He didn't say a word when I handed him the bill.

In the rental-company lot, Mr. Liu ran a finger along the dent. "No problem!" he said.

"Look, I'm happy to pay for it," I said.

"You're an old customer," he said. "Forget it." We shook hands and I left him at the front desk, smoking a cigarette beneath the eternal sign:

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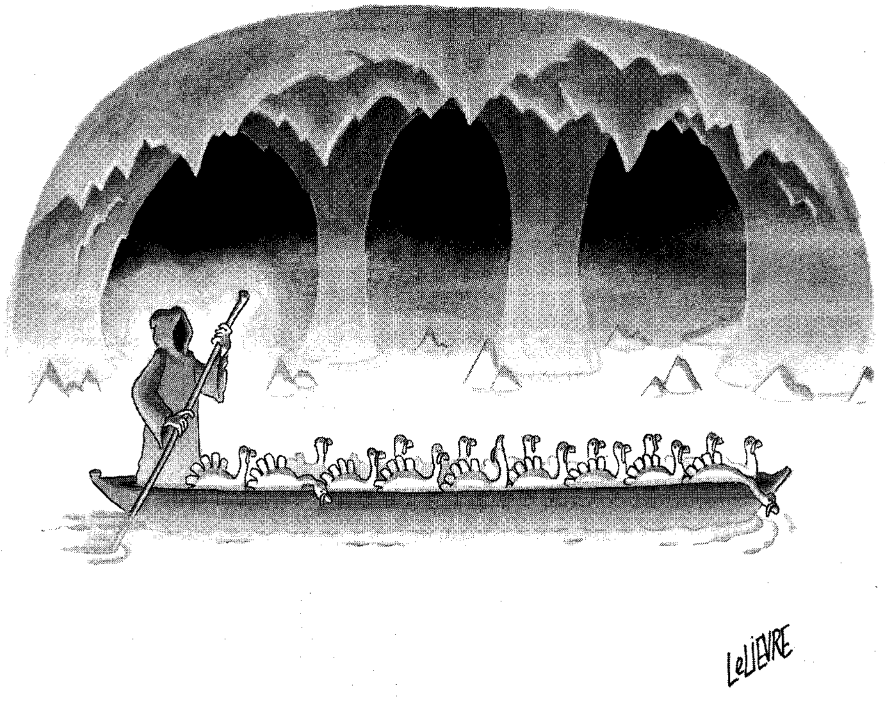

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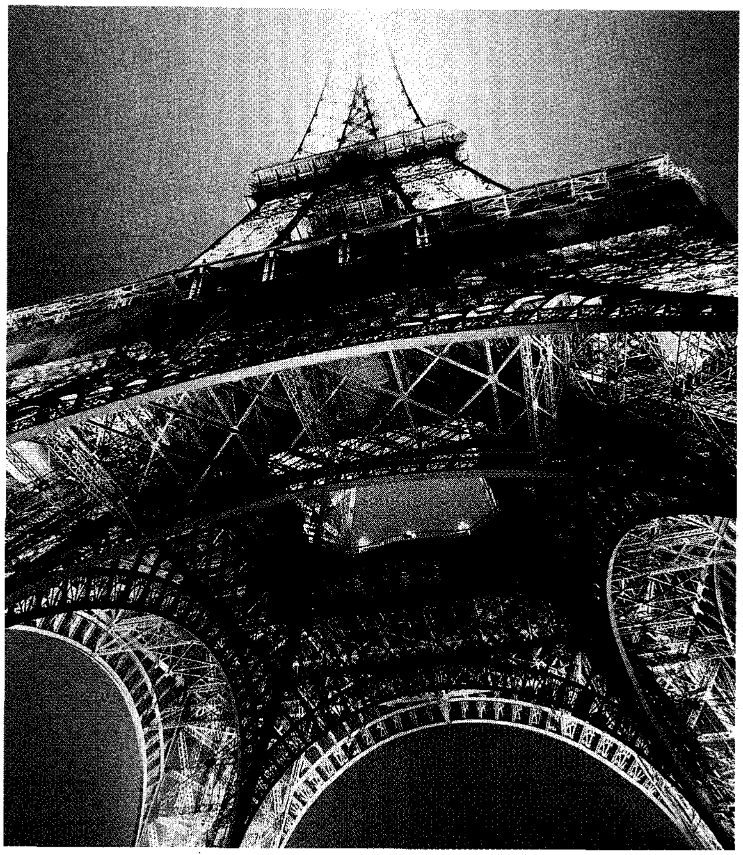
FICTION

ÁLVARO ROUSSELOT'S JOURNEY

BY ROBERTO BOLAÑO



MICHAEL KENNA, "EIFFEL TOWER, STUDY 3" (1987)/ROBERT MANN GALLERY

Although it may not warrant an eminent place in the annals of literary mystery, the curious case of Álvaro Rousselot is worthy of attention, for a few minutes, at least.

Keen readers of mid-twentieth-century Argentine literature, who do exist, albeit not in great numbers, will no doubt remember that Rousselot was a skilled narrator and an abundant inventor of plots, a sound stylist in literary Spanish, but not averse to the use of Buenos Aires slang, or *lunfardo*, when a story required it (as was often the case), though never in a mannered way, at least in our opinion—that is, the opinion of his faithful readers.

But the action of that sinister and eminently sardonic character Time has prompted a reconsideration of Rousselot's apparent simplicity. Perhaps he was complicated. By which I mean more complicated than we had imagined. Or, there is an alternative explanation: perhaps he was simply another victim of chance.

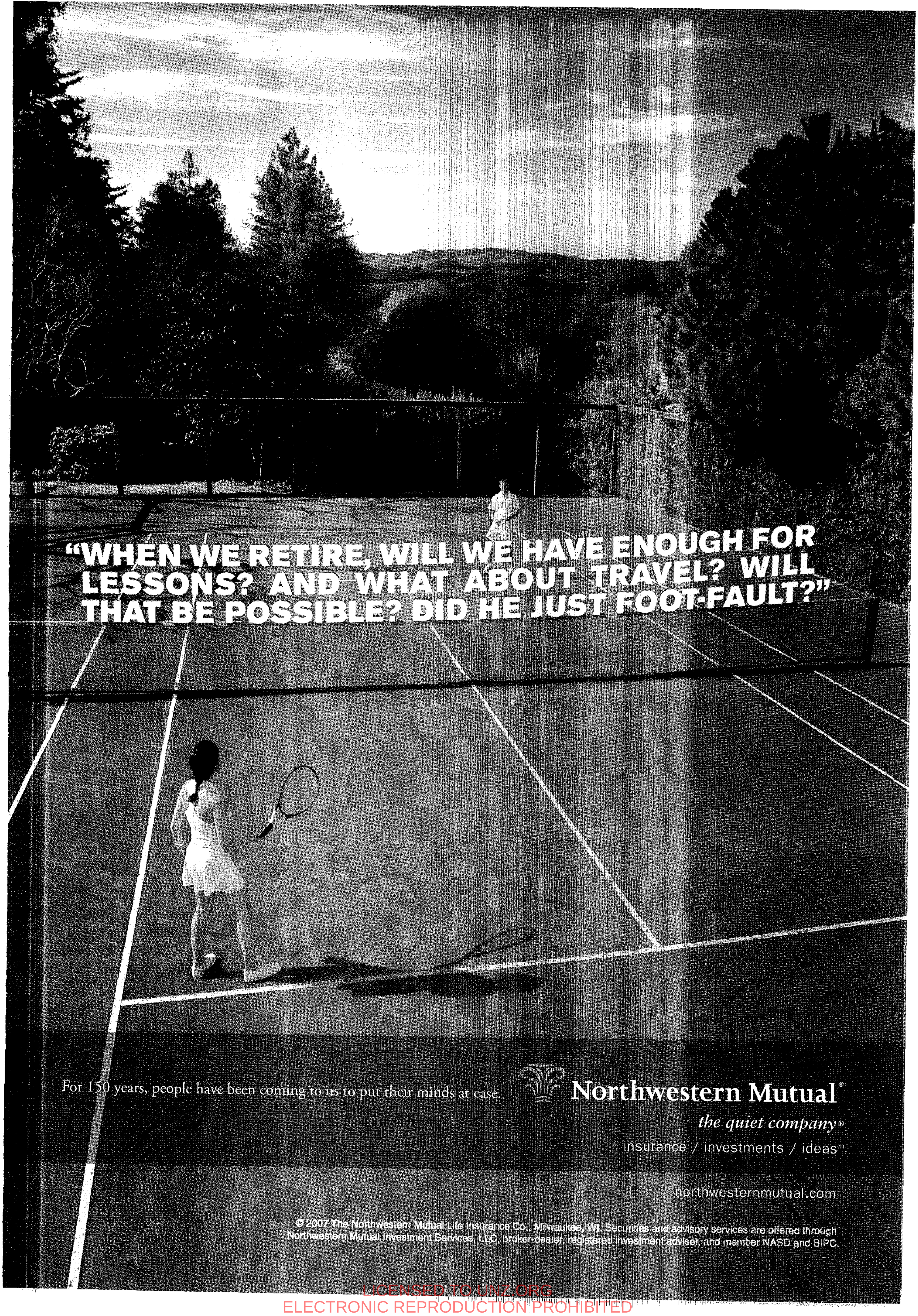
Such cases are not unusual among lovers of literature like Rousselot. In fact, they are not unusual among lovers of anything. In the end, we all outlast the object of our adoration, perhaps because passion runs its course more swiftly than other human emotions, perhaps as a result of excessive familiarity with the object of desire.

In any case, Rousselot loved literature as much as any Argentine writer of his generation, or of the preceding and following generations, which is to say that he loved literature in a reasonably disillusioned manner, like many of his compatriots. What I mean to say is that he was not especially different from the others, from the peers who shared his moments of joy and his suffering, yet nothing even remotely similar happened to any of them.

At this point, it could be objected, quite reasonably, that the others were destined for their own hells, their own singularities. Angela Caputo, for example, killed herself in an unimaginable manner: no one who had read her poems, with their charged and ambivalently childlike atmosphere, could have predicted such an atrocious death, stage-managed down to the finest detail for maximum terrifying effect. Or Sánchez Brady, whose texts were hermetic and whose life was cut short by the military regime in the seventies, when he had passed the age of fifty and lost interest in literature (and in the world in general).

Paradoxical deaths and destinies, yet they do not eclipse the case of Rousselot, of the enigma that imperceptibly enveloped his life, the sense that his work, his writing, stood near or on the edge of something he knew almost nothing about.

His story can be recounted simply, perhaps because, in the final analysis, it is a simple story. In 1950, at the age of thirty, Rousselot published his first book, a novel about daily life in a remote Patagonian penitentiary, under the rather laconic title "Solitude." Naturally, the book relates numerous confessions about past lives and fleeting moments of happiness; it also relates numerous acts of violence. Halfway through the novel, it becomes apparent that most of the characters are dead. With only thirty pages left to go, it is suddenly obvious that they are all dead, except for one, but the identity of that single living character is never revealed. The book was not much of a success in Buenos Aires, selling less than a thousand copies, but, thanks to some friends, Rousselot had the pleasure of seeing a well-respected publisher bring out a French edition in 1954. "Solitude" became "Nights on the Pampas" in the land of Victor Hugo, where it made little impact, except on two critics, one of whom reviewed it warmly, while the other was perhaps excessively enthusiastic. Then it



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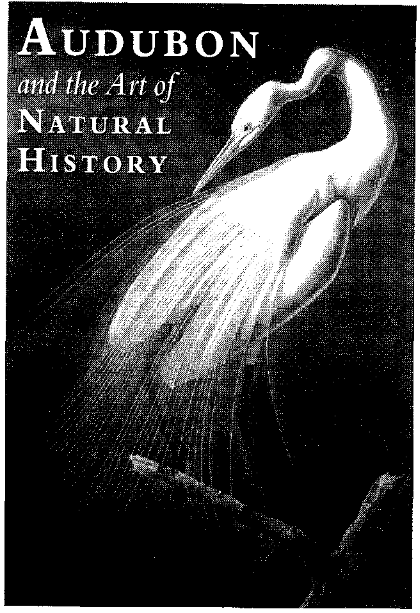

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vanished into the limbo of dusty shelves and overloaded tables in secondhand bookstores.

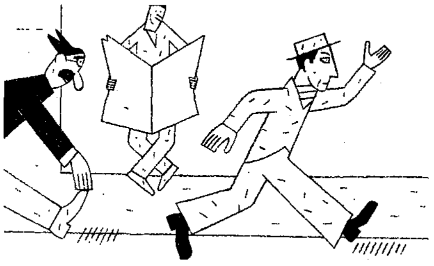
At the end of 1957, however, a film titled “Lost Voices” was released; it was directed by a Frenchman named Guy Morini, and for anyone who had read “Solitude” it was clearly a clever adaptation of Rousselot's book. Morini's film began and ended altogether differently, but its stem or middle section corresponded exactly to the novel. It would be impossible to capture Rousselot's feeling of stunned amazement in the dark, half-empty Buenos Aires cinema where he first saw the Frenchman's film. Naturally, he considered himself a victim of plagiarism. As the days went by, other explanations occurred to him, but he kept coming back to the idea that his work had been plagiarized. Of the friends who were alerted and went to see the film, half were in favor of suing the production company, while the others were inclined to argue, more or less resignedly, that these things happen—think of Brahms. By that time, Rousselot had already published a second novel, “The Archives of Peru Street,” a detective story, with a plot that revolved around the appearance of three bodies in three different places in Buenos Aires: the first two victims had been killed by the third, victim in turn of an unidentified killer.

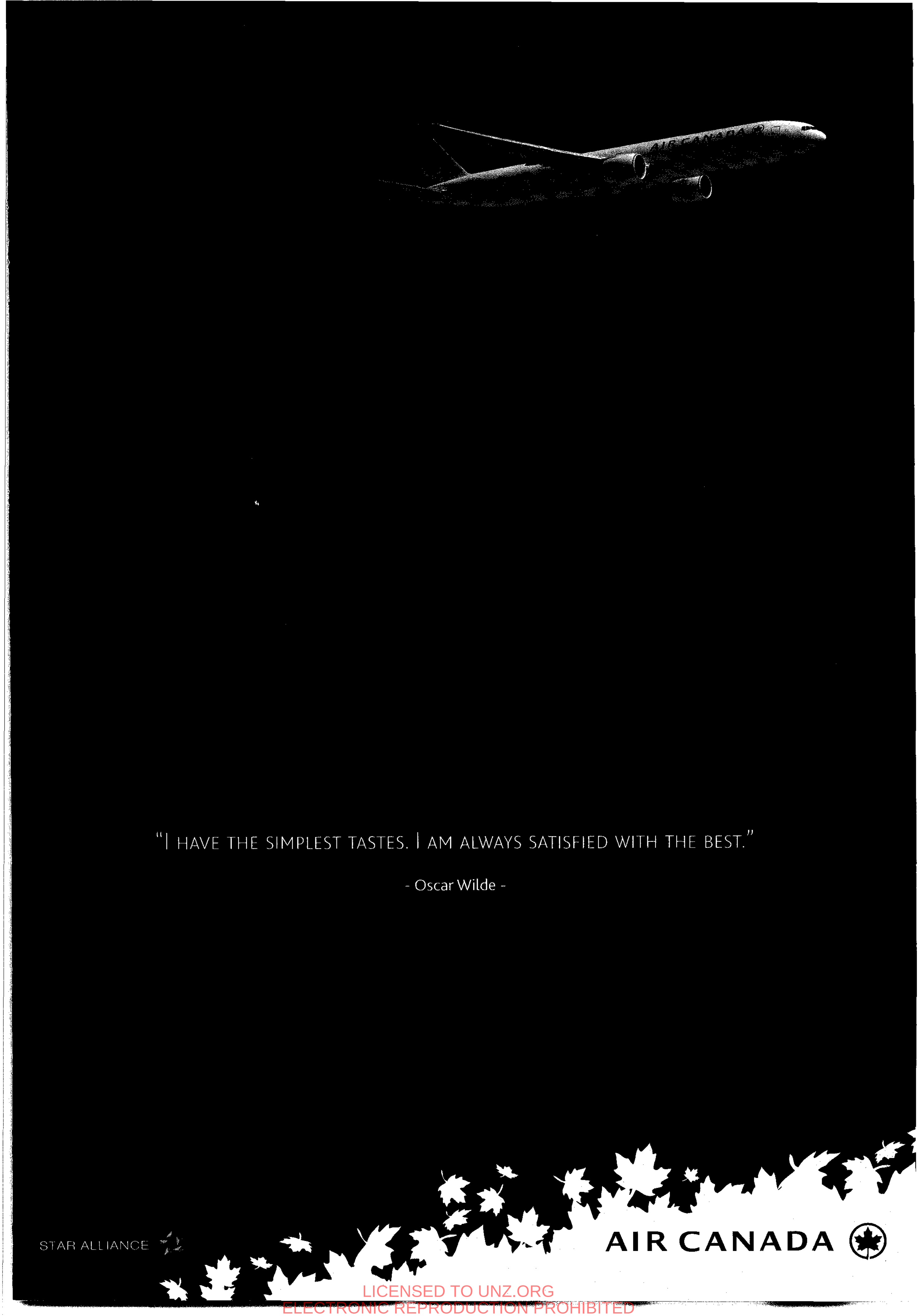
This second novel was not what one might have expected from the author of “Solitude.” Still, it was well received, although it is perhaps the least successful of Rousselot's works. When Morini's film came out in Buenos Aires, “The Archives of Peru Street” had already been kicking around the city's bookshops for almost a year, and Rousselot had married María Eugenia Carrasco, a young woman who moved in the capital's literary circles, and he had recently taken a job with the law firm of Zimmerman & Gurruchaga.

Rousselot's life was orderly: he got up at six in the morning and wrote or tried to write until eight, at which time he interrupted his commerce with the muses, took a shower, and rushed off to the office, where he arrived at around ten to nine. He spent most mornings in court or going through files. At two in the afternoon, he returned home, had lunch with his wife, and then went back to the office for the afternoon. At seven, he had a drink with some other lawyers, and by eight, at the latest, he was back home, where Mrs. Rousselot, as she now was, had his dinner ready, after which Rousselot would read, while María Eugenia listened to the radio. On Saturdays and Sundays, he wrote a bit more, and went out at night, without his wife, to see his literary friends.

The release of “Lost Voices” brought him a notoriety that extended, in a modest way, beyond his circle of associates. His best friend at the law firm, who was not particularly interested in literature, advised him to sue Morini for copyright infringement. Having thought it over carefully, Rousselot decided not to do anything. After “The Archives of Peru Street,” he published a slim volume of stories, and then, almost immediately, his third novel, “Life of a Newlywed,” in which, as the title suggests, he recounted a man's first months of married life, and how, as the days go by, the man comes to realize that he has made a terrible mistake: not only is the woman he thought he knew a stranger; she is also a kind of monster who threatens even his physical safety. And yet the guy loves her (or, rather, discovers that he is physically attracted to her in a way that he wasn't before), so he holds on for as long as he can before fleeing.

The book was, obviously, meant to be humorous, and was embraced by the reading public, to the surprise of Rousselot and his publisher: it had to be reprinted after three months, and within a year more than fifteen thousand copies had been sold. From one day to the next, Rousselot's name soared from comfortable semi-obscurity to provisional stardom. He took it in stride. With the windfall earnings, he treated himself, his wife, and his sister-in-law to a vacation in Punta del Este, which he spent surreptitiously reading “In Search of Lost Time,” a book he had always pretended to have read. While María Eugenia and her sister lolled about on the beach, he strove to redeem that lie, but above all to fill the gap left

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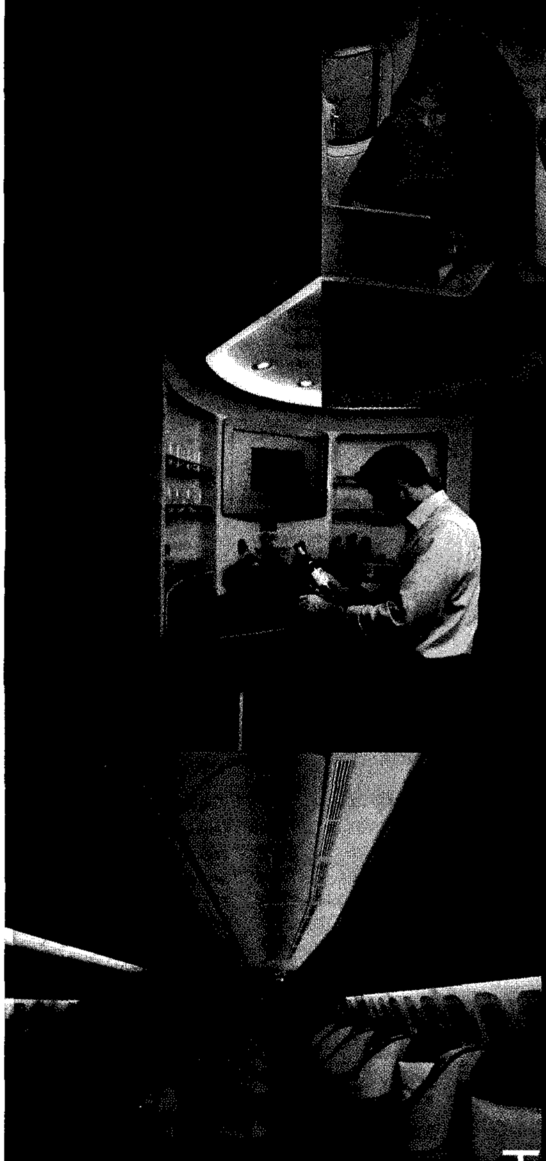

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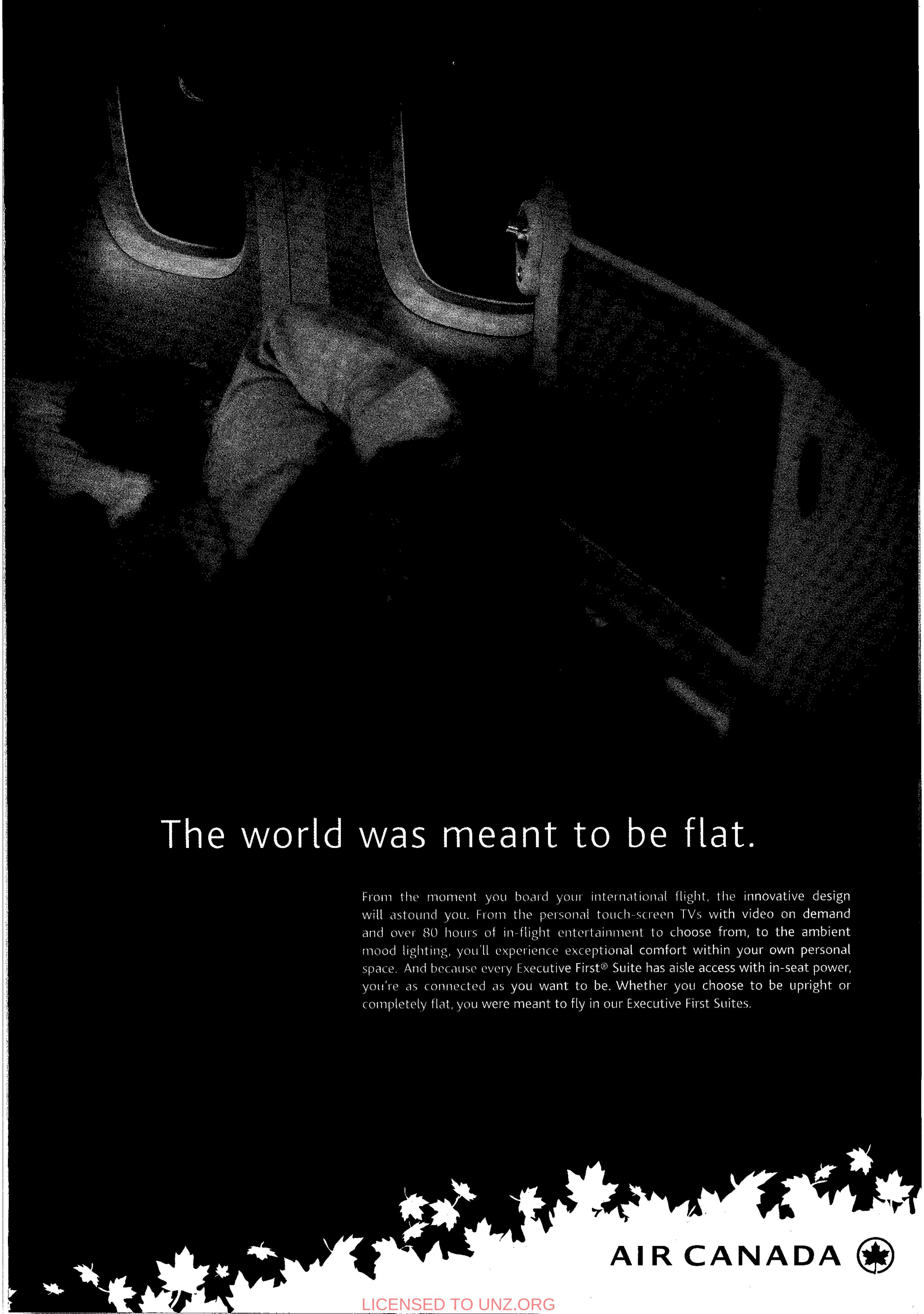

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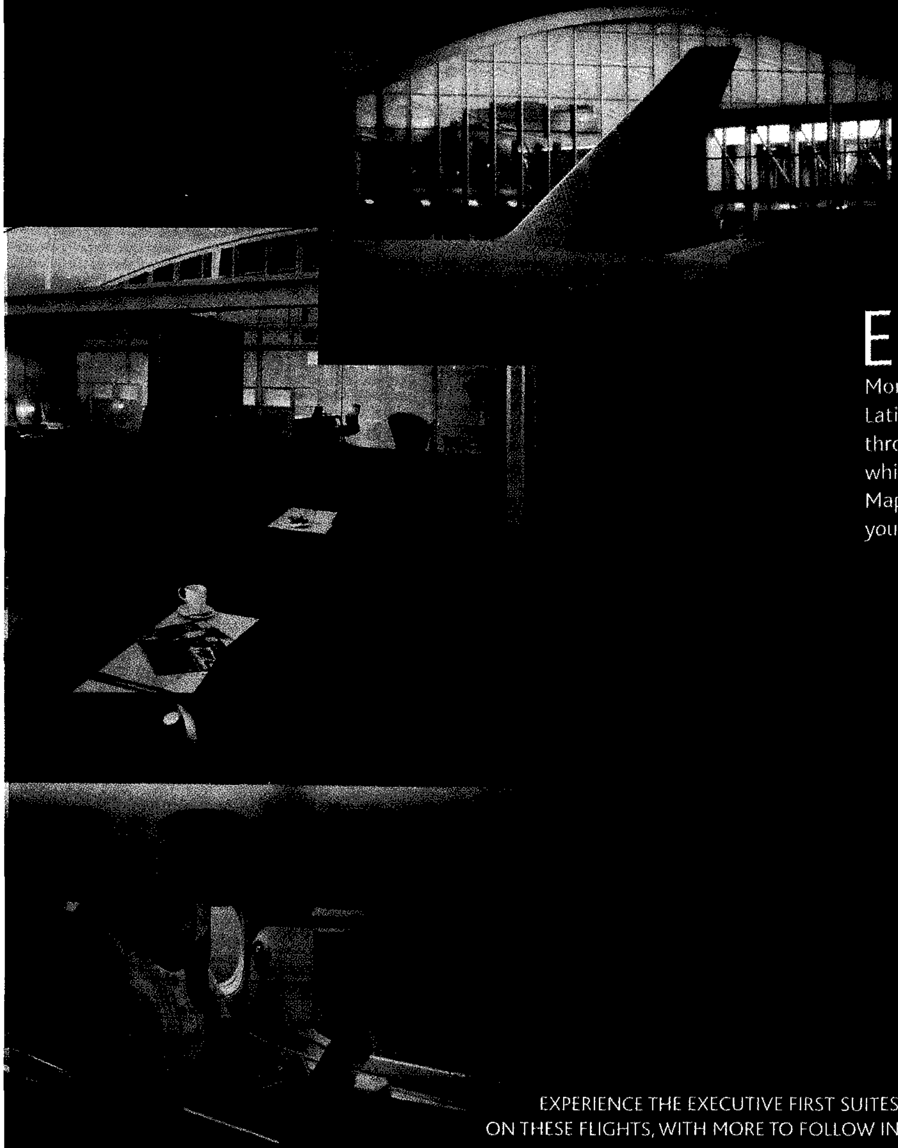

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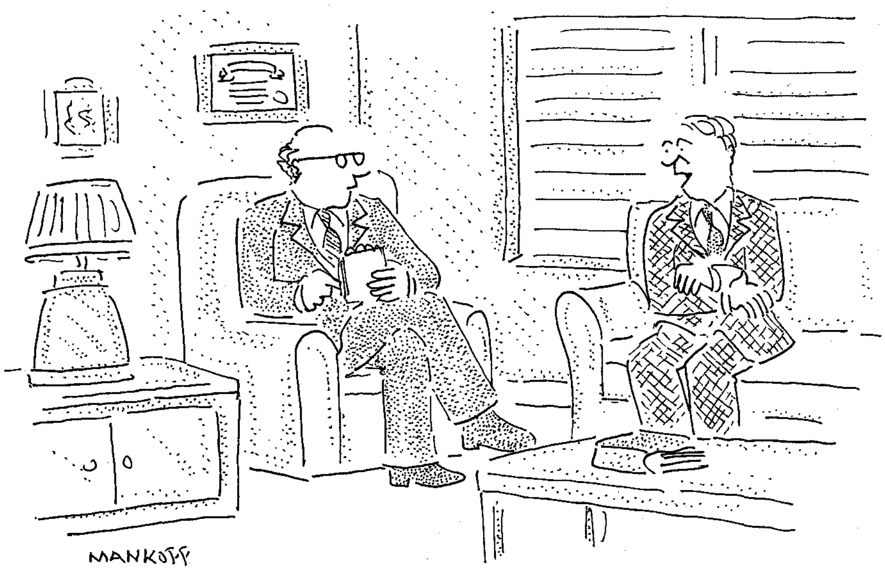

"I do count my blessings, but then I end up counting those of others who have more and better blessings, and that pisses me off."

by his ignorance of France's most celebrated novelist.

He would have been better off reading the Cabalists. Seven months after his vacation in Punta del Este, before "Life of a Newlywed" had even come out in French, Morini's new film, "The Shape of the Day," opened in Buenos Aires. It was exactly like "Life of a Newlywed" but better; that is, revised and considerably extended in much the same way that "Lost Voices" had been, compressing Rousselot's plot into the central part of the film, while the beginning and the end served as commentaries on the main story (or ways into and out of it, or dead ends, or simply—and herein lay the charm of this method—delicately filmed scenes from the lives of the minor characters).

This time, Rousselot was intensely annoyed. His case against Morini was the talk of the Argentine literary world for a week or so. And yet, although everyone presumed that he would take swift legal action, Rousselot decided, to the dismay of those who had expected a stronger and more decisive attitude on his part, to do nothing. Few could really understand his reaction. He did not protest, or appeal to the honor and integrity of the artist. After his initial surprise and indignation, Rousselot simply opted not to act—at least, not legally. He waited. Something inside him, which could perhaps, without too great a risk of error, be called the writer's spirit, trapped him in a limbo of apparent passivity, and began to harden or change him, or prepare him for future surprises.

In other respects, his life as a writer and as a man had already changed as much as he could reasonably have hoped, or more: his books were well reviewed and widely read—they even supplemented his income—and his family life was suddenly enriched by the news that María Eugenia was going to be a mother.

When Morini's third film came to Buenos Aires, Rousselot stayed home for a week, resisting the temptation to rush to the cinema like a man possessed. He also instructed his friends not to tell him the plot. At first, he thought he would not go to see the film. But after a week it was too much for him, and one night, having kissed his baby son and entrusted him to the nanny's care, as if he were going off to war and might never return, he stepped out, resignedly, arm in arm with his wife, and went to the cinema.

Morini's film was called "The Vanished Woman," and had nothing in common with any of Rousselot's works, or with either of Morini's previous films. As they left the cinema, María Eugenia said she thought it was bad and boring. Álvaro Rousselot kept his opinion to himself, but he agreed. A few months later, he published his next novel, his longest yet (206 pages), titled "The Juggler's Family," in which he departed

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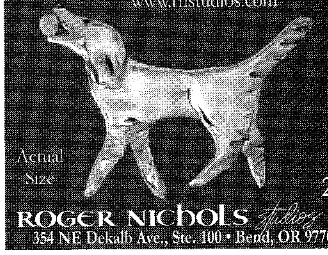
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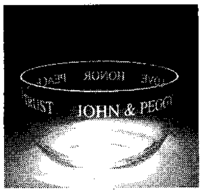
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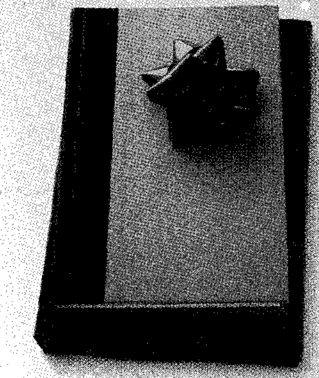

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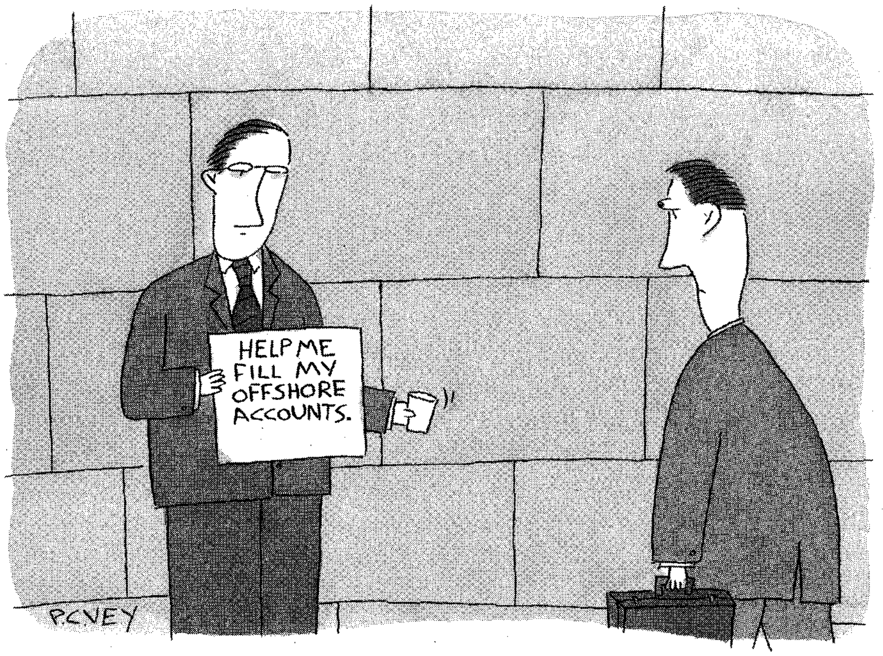
from the style that had characterized his work so far, with its elements of fantasy and crime fiction, and experimented with what could, at a stretch, be called the choral, or polyphonic, novel. It was a form that didn't come naturally to him, and seemed forced, but the book was redeemed by the decency and simplicity of its characters, by a naturalism that elegantly avoided the clichés of the naturalist novel, and by the stories themselves: minimalist and resolute, upbeat and gratuitous narratives, which captured the indomitable Argentine spirit.

"The Juggler's Family" was, without doubt, Rousselot's greatest success, the book that brought all the others back into print, and his triumph was consummated by the Municipal Literary Award, presented at a ceremony in the course of which he was described as one of the five brightest stars among the nation's younger writers. But that is another story. Everyone knows that the bright rising stars in the literature of any nation are like flowers that bloom and fade in a day; and whether that day is brief and succinct or extends over ten or twenty years, it must eventually come to an end.

The French, who distrust our Municipal Literary Awards on principle, were slow to translate and publish "The Juggler's Family." By then, French fashions in Latin-American fiction had shifted to warmer climes than Buenos Aires. When the novel came out in Paris, from a different publisher, Morini had already made his fourth and fifth films, a conventional but engaging French detective story and a turkey about a supposedly amusing family vacation in Saint-Tropez.

Both films were released in Argentina, and Rousselot was relieved to discover that neither bore the slightest resemblance to anything he had ever written. It was as if Morini had distanced himself from Rousselot or, under pressure from creditors and swept up in the whirlwind of the movie business, had neglected the relationship. After relief came sadness. For a few days, Rousselot was even preoccupied by the thought that he had lost his best reader, the reader for whom he had really been writing, the only one who was truly capable of responding to his work. He tried to get in touch with his translators, but they were busy with other books and other authors, and replied to his letters with polite and evasive phrases. One of them had never seen any of Morini's films. The other had seen only the film that resembled the book he had not translated (or read, to judge from his letter).

When Rousselot asked his publishers in Paris if Morini might have had access to the manuscript of "Life of a Newlywed" before its publication, they weren't even surprised. They replied indifferently that many people had access to a manuscript at various stages prior to printing. Feeling embarrassed, Rousselot decided to stop annoying

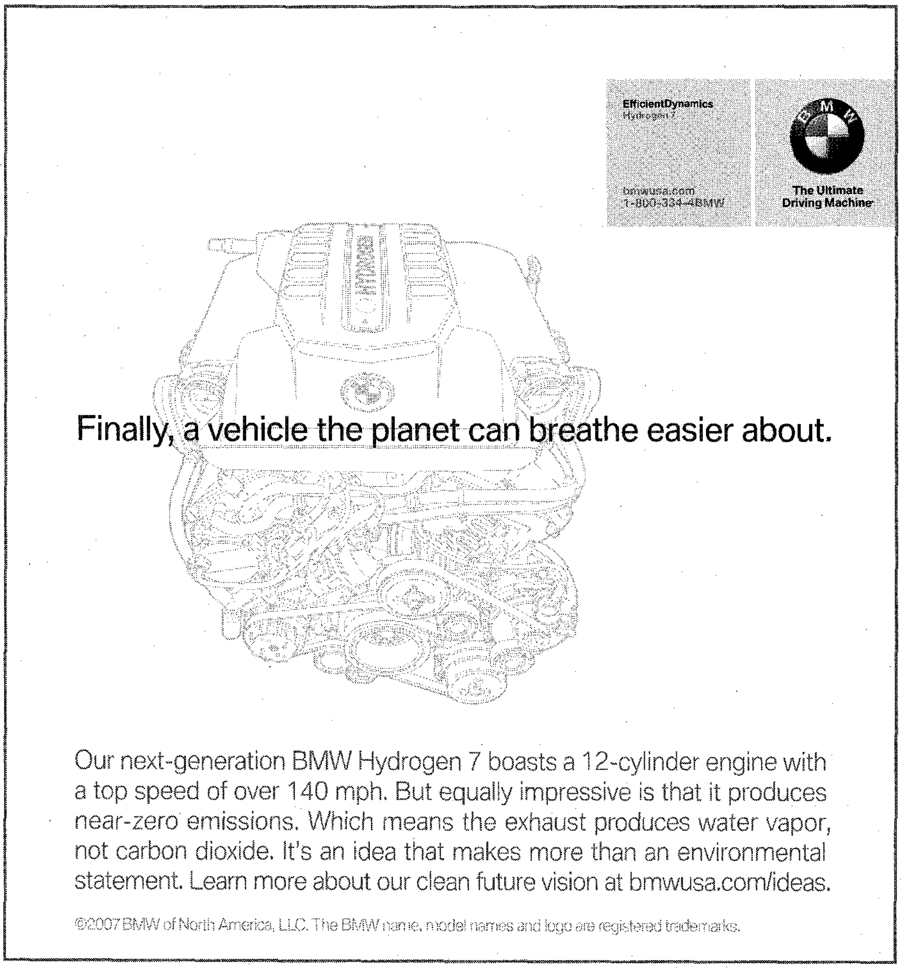


people with his letters and suspend his investigations until at last he got a chance to visit Paris.

A year later, he was invited to a literary festival in Frankfurt. The Argentine delegation was sizable, and the trip was pleasant. Rousselot got to know two old Buenos Aires writers whom he considered his masters. He tried to help them in any way he could, offering to render the sorts of little services one might expect from a secretary or a valet rather than a colleague, for which he was reproached by a writer of his own generation, who called him obsequious and servile. But Rousselot was happy and paid no attention. The stay in Frankfurt was enjoyable, in spite of the weather, and Rousselot spent all his time with the pair of old writers.

The slightly artificial atmosphere of happiness was, in fact, largely Rousselot's own creation. He knew that when the festival was over he would go on to Paris, while the others would return to Buenos Aires or take short vacations somewhere in Europe. When the day of departure came and Rousselot went to the airport to see off the members of the delegation who were returning to Argentina, his eyes filled with tears. One of the old writers noticed and told him not to worry; they would see each other again soon, and the door of his house in Buenos Aires would always be open. But Rousselot couldn't understand what anyone was saying to him. He was on the brink of tears because he was afraid of being left on his own, and afraid, above all, of going to Paris and confronting the mystery waiting for him there.

The first thing he did, as soon as he had settled into a little hotel in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, was to call the translator of "Solitude" ("Nights on the Pampas"), unsuccessfully. The phone rang at his apartment, but no one picked up, and when he went to the publishers' offices they had no idea where the translator might be. To tell the truth, they had no idea who Rousselot was, although he pointed out that they had published two of his books, "Nights on the Pampas" and "Life of a Newlywed." Finally, a guy who must have been about fifty, and whose role at the company Rousselot never managed to ascertain, placed the visitor and, changing the topic completely, immediately proceeded to inform him, in an ab-



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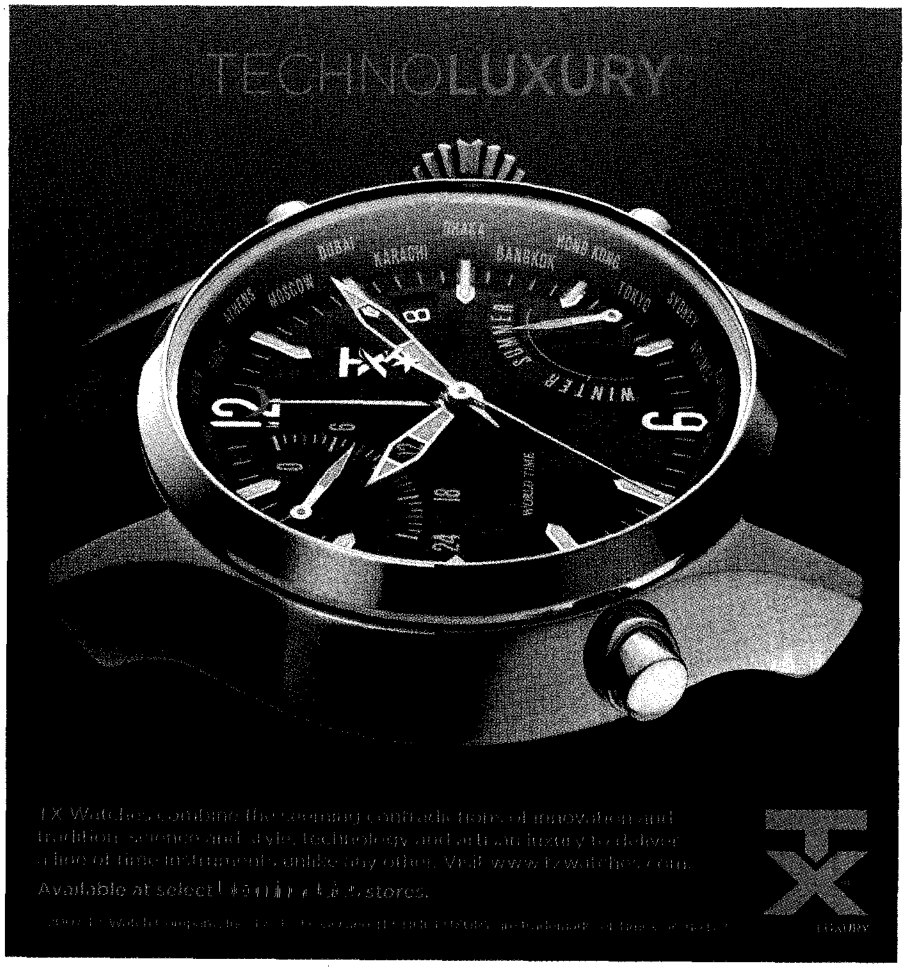

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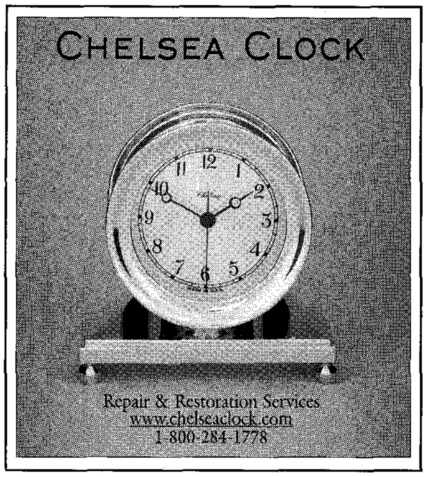
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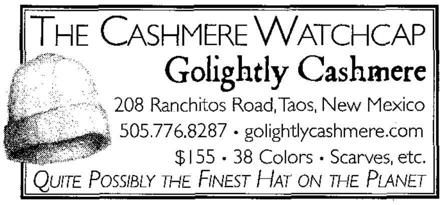
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surdly serious tone, that the sales of his books had been very poor.

Rousselot then visited the publishers of "The Juggler's Family" (which Morini, it seemed, had never read) and made a halfhearted attempt to obtain the address of the translator they had employed, hoping that he would be able to put him in touch with the translators of "Nights on the Pampas" and "Life of a Newlywed." This second publishing house was significantly smaller, and seemed to be run by just two people: a woman who received Rousselot, who he guessed was a secretary, and the publisher, a young guy who greeted him with a smile and a hug, and who insisted on speaking Spanish, although it was soon clear that his grasp of the language was tenuous. When asked why he wanted to speak with the translator of "The Juggler's Family," Rousselot was at a loss for words, because it had just dawned on him how absurd it was to think that any of his translators would be able to lead him to Morini. Nevertheless, encouraged by the publisher's warm welcome (and his readiness to listen, since he didn't seem to have anything better to do that morning), Rousselot decided to tell him the whole story, from A to Z.

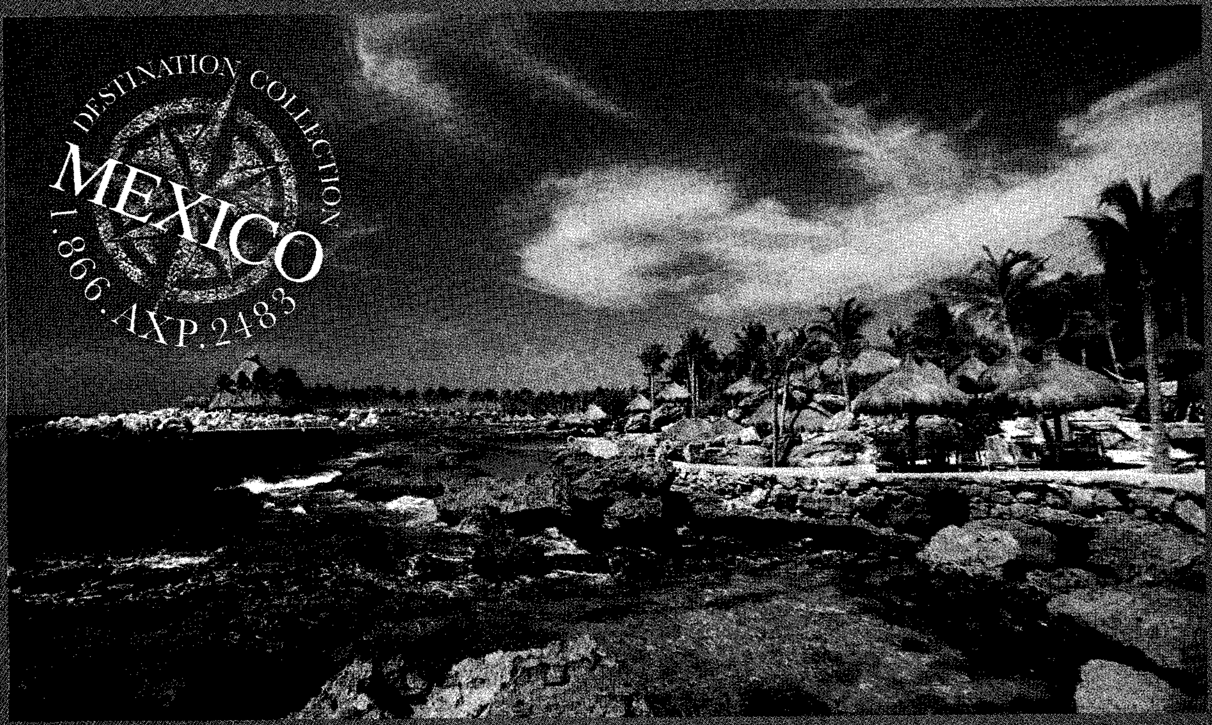
When he had finished, the publisher lit a cigarette and paced up and down the office for a long time in silence, walking from one wall to the other, a distance of barely three yards. Rousselot waited, becoming increasingly nervous. Finally, the publisher stopped in front of a glass-fronted bookcase full of manuscripts and asked Rousselot if it was his first time in Paris. Rather taken aback, Rousselot admitted that it was. "Parisians are cannibals," the publisher said. Rousselot hastened to point out that he was not intending to take any kind of legal action against Morini; he only wanted to meet him and perhaps ask him how he came up with the plots of the two films in which he had a particular interest, so to speak. The publisher burst into uproarious laughter. "It's all about money here," he said, "ever since Camus." Rousselot looked at him, bewildered. He didn't know whether the publisher meant that idealism had died with Camus, and money was now the prime concern, or that Camus had established the law of supply and demand among artists and intellectuals.

"I'm not interested in money," Rousselot said quietly. "Nor am I, my poor friend," the publisher said, "and look where it's got me."

They parted with the understanding that Rousselot would call the publisher and arrange to have dinner one night. He spent the rest of the day sightseeing. He went to the Louvre and the Eiffel Tower; he ate in a restaurant in the Latin Quarter and visited a couple of secondhand bookshops. That night, from his hotel, he called an Argentine writer he had known back in Buenos Aires who lived in Paris now. They weren't exactly friends, but Rousselot appreciated the writer's work and had been instrumental in getting a number of his pieces published in a Buenos Aires magazine.

The Argentine writer was called Riquelme and he was happy to hear from Rousselot. Rousselot wanted to arrange to meet up some time during the week, perhaps for lunch or dinner, but Riquelme wouldn't hear of it, and asked him where he was calling from. Rousselot told him the name of his hotel and mentioned that he was just going to bed. But he was not even to think of getting into his pajamas; Riquelme would be right there—the night was on him. Rousselot was overwhelmed, powerless to resist. He hadn't seen Riquelme for years, and while waiting for him in the lobby of the hotel he tried to remember what he looked like. He had blond hair and a round, broad face with a ruddy complexion; he was short. It had been a while since Rousselot had read any of his work.

When Riquelme finally appeared, Rousselot hardly recognized him: he seemed taller, less blond, and he was wearing glasses. The night was rich in confessions and revelations. Rousselot told his friend what he had told his French publisher that morning, and Riquelme told Rousselot that he was writing the great Argentine novel of the twentieth century. He had passed the eight-hundred-page mark and hoped to finish it in less than three years. Although Rousselot prudently



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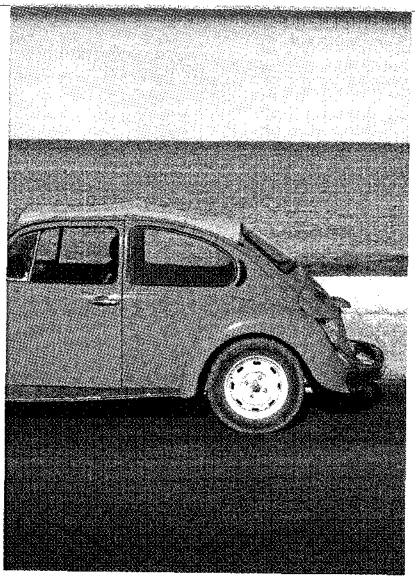

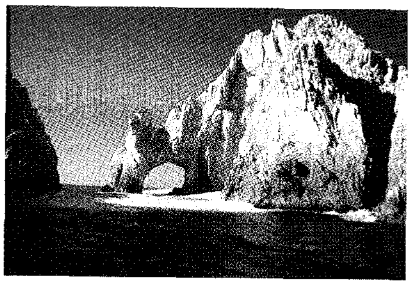

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refrained from asking about the plot, Riquelme explained several sections of his book in detail. They visited various bars and clubs. At some point during the night, Rousselot realized that both he and Riquelme were behaving like adolescents. At first, this embarrassed him, but then he surrendered to the situation, happy to know that his hotel would be there at the end of the night, his hotel room and the word "hotel," which in that instant seemed a miraculous (that is to say evanescent) incarnation of risk and freedom.

He drank a lot. On waking, he discovered a woman beside him. The woman's name was Simone, and she was a prostitute. They had breakfast together in a café near the hotel. Simone liked to talk, so Rousselot discovered that she didn't have a pimp, because a pimp was always the worst kind of deal, that she had just turned twenty-eight, and that she liked watching movies. Since he wasn't interested in the world of Parisian pimps and Simone's age didn't seem a fruitful topic of conversation, they started talking about movies. She liked French cinema, and before long they got onto Morini. His first films were very good, in Simone's opinion. Rousselot could have kissed her then and there.

At two in the afternoon, they returned to the hotel and didn't reëmerge until dinnertime. It would probably be true to say that Rousselot had never felt so good in his life. He wanted to write, and eat, and go out dancing with Simone, and wander aimlessly through the streets of the Left Bank. In fact, he felt so good that during the meal, shortly before they ordered dessert, he explained the reason for his trip to Paris. Surprisingly for Rousselot, Simone was not at all surprised by the revelation that he was a writer or that Morini had plagiarized or copied his work, or freely adapted two of his novels to make his two best films.

Things like that happen in life, and even stranger things, was her laconic response. Then, point blank, she asked him if he was married. The answer was implicit in the question, and with a resigned gesture Rousselot showed her the gold ring that was constricting his ring finger at that moment as never before. "And do you have children?" Simone asked. "A little boy," Rousselot said, with a tenderness engendered by the mental image of his offspring. And he added, "He looks just like me." Then Simone asked him to keep her company on the way home. In the taxi, neither of them said anything; both looked out their windows at the unpredictable spills of bright and dark which make the City of Light seem like a medieval Russian city, or at least like the images of such cities that Soviet directors used to offer for public consumption every now and then in their films. Finally, the

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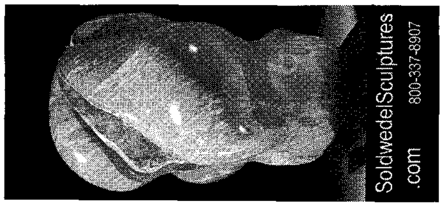
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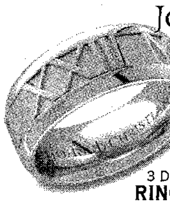

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But I'm not tired, it says.
And the mother says, You may not be tired but I'm tired—

You can see it in her face, everyone can.
So the snow has to fall, sleep has to come.
Because the mother's sick to death of her life
and needs silence.

—*Louise Glück*

taxi pulled up in front of a four-story building, and Simone invited him to come in. Rousselot wondered whether he should, and then he remembered that he hadn't paid her. Shamefaced, he got out of the taxi without worrying about how he would get back to his hotel (there didn't seem to be many taxis in that neighborhood). Before going into the building, he held out a bunch of uncounted bills, which Simone put into her handbag without counting them, either.

The building didn't have an elevator. By the time they reached the fourth floor, Rousselot was out of breath. In the dimly lit living room, an old woman was drinking a whitish-colored liqueur. In response to a sign from Simone, Rousselot sat down next to the old woman, who produced a glass and filled it with that appalling liquid, while Simone vanished through one of the doors, then reappeared after a while and summoned him with a gesture. What now? Rousselot thought.

The room was small; it contained a bed in which a child was sleeping. "My son," Simone said. "He's lovely," Rousselot said. And so he was, but perhaps that was only because he was asleep. He had blond hair, rather too long, and resembled his mother, although Rousselot noted that there was already something thoroughly manly about his childish features. When Rousselot went back to the living room, Simone was paying the old woman, who then took her leave of Mme. Simone, and even wished her visitor an effusive good night, calling him sir. Rousselot was thinking that the day had been eventful enough and that it was time to leave when Simone said he could spend the night with her, if he liked. "But you can't sleep in my bed," she said; she didn't want her son to wake up and see her in bed with a stranger. So they made love in Simone's room, and then Rousselot went out into the living room, lay down on the couch, and fell asleep.

He spent the next day *en famille*, so to speak. The little boy's name was Marc; Rousselot found him to be very bright (as well as able to speak better French than he did). The novelist spared no expense: they had breakfast in the center of Paris, went to a park, and had lunch in a restaurant on the Rue de Verneuil that he had been told about in Buenos Aires; then they went rowing on a lake, and finally they visited a supermarket, where Simone bought all the ingredients for a proper French meal. They took taxis everywhere. As they waited for ice creams on a café terrace on the Boulevard Saint-Germain, Rousselot recognized a pair of famous writers. He admired them from a distance. Simone asked him if he knew them. He said no, but he was a passionate reader of their books. "Then go and ask them for an autograph," she said.

At first, it seemed a perfectly reasonable idea, the natural thing to do, but at the last minute Rousselot decided that he didn't have the right to annoy anyone, least of all people he had always admired. That night, he slept in Simone's bed; they covered each other's mouths to stop their moans from waking the child, and made love for hours, violently at times, as if loving each other were the only thing they knew how to do. The next day, he returned to his hotel before the child woke up.

His suitcase had not been put out on

the street, as he had feared, and no one was surprised to see him appear out of nowhere, like a ghost. At reception, there were two messages from Riquelme. The first was to say he had found out how to reach Morini. The second was to ask if Rousselot was still interested in meeting him.

He showered, shaved, brushed his teeth (a horrifying experience), put on clean clothes, and called Riquelme. They talked for a long time. Riquelme told him that a friend of his, a Spanish journalist, knew another journalist, a Frenchman, who was a freelance movie, theatre, and music critic. The French journalist had been a friend of Morini's and still had his telephone number. When the Spaniard had asked for the number, the Frenchman had given it to him without a second thought. Then Riquelme and the Spanish journalist had called Morini's number without getting their hopes up, and were amazed when the woman who answered told them that they had indeed reached the director's residence.

Now all they had to do was set up a meeting (at which Riquelme and the Spanish journalist wanted to be present) on some pretext, whatever—for example, an interview for an Argentine newspaper, with a surprise ending. "What do you mean, a surprise ending?" Rousselot shouted. "The surprise ending comes when the bogus journalist reveals his true identity to the plagiarist," Riquelme replied.

That night, as Rousselot was taking photographs more or less at random on the banks of the Seine, a bum came up and asked him for some change. Rousselot offered him a bill if he would consent to be photographed. The bum agreed, and for a while they walked along together in silence, stopping every now and then to allow the Argentine writer to move off to an appropriate distance and take a photo. On the third such occasion, the bum suggested a pose, which Rousselot accepted without quibbling. The writer took eight photos in all: the bum on his knees with his arms stretched out to the sides, and in other poses, such as pretending to sleep on a bench, thoughtfully watching the river flow by, or smiling and waving his hand. When the photo session was over, Rousselot gave him two bills and all the coins in his pocket, and then the pair of them

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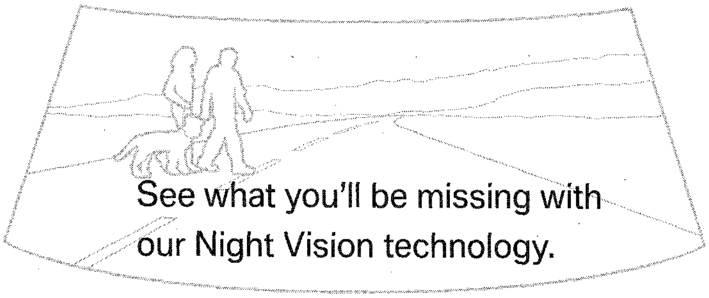

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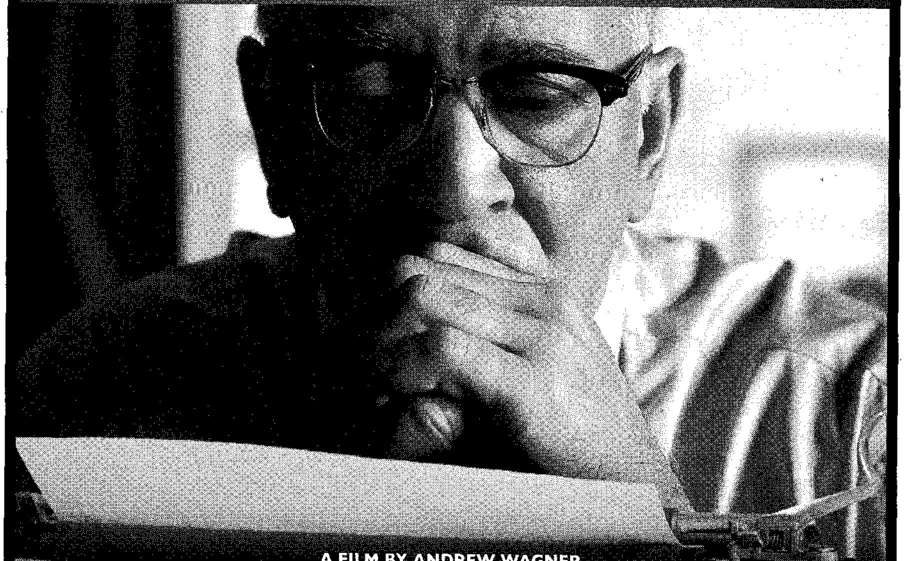

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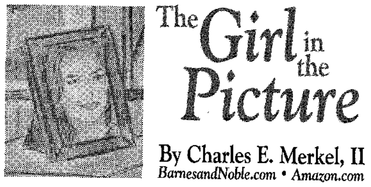

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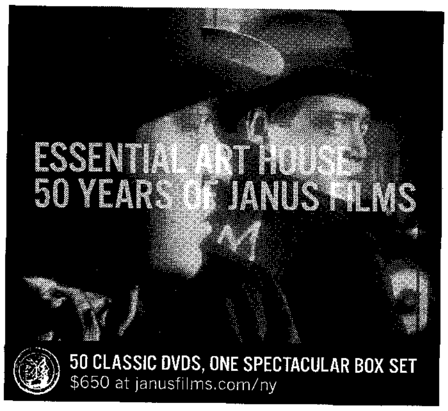

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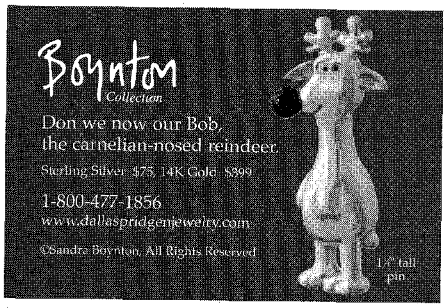

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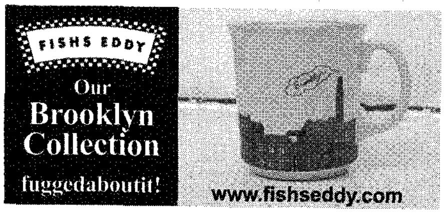

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stood there together, as if there were something more to be said but neither of them dared say it. "Where are you from?" the bum asked. "Buenos Aires, Argentina," Rousselot replied. "What a coincidence," the bum said, in Spanish. "I'm Argentine, too." Rousselot was not at all surprised by this revelation. The bum began to hum a tango, then told him that in Europe, where he'd been living for more than fifteen years, he had found happiness and even some wisdom now and then. Rousselot realized that the bum had started using the familiar form of address, which he hadn't done when they were speaking in French. Even his voice, the tone of his voice, seemed to have changed. Rousselot felt a deep sadness overwhelming him, as if he knew that, come the end of the day, he would have to look into an abyss. The bum noticed and asked him what he was worried about.

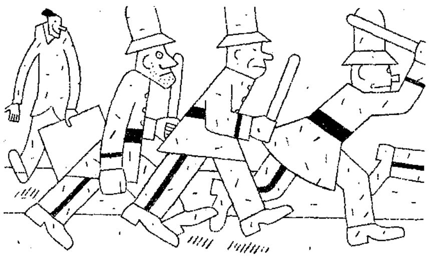
"Nothing, a girl," Rousselot said, trying to adopt the same tone as his compatriot. Then he said a rather hurried goodbye, and as he was climbing the stairs from the quai to the street he heard the bum's voice telling him that death was the only sure thing: "My name is Enzo Cherubini and I'm telling you that death is the only sure thing there is." When Rousselot turned around, the bum was walking off in the opposite direction.

He called Simone that night, but she wasn't home. He talked for a while with the old woman who looked after the child, then hung up. At ten, Riquelme came visiting. Reluctant to go out, Rousselot said he felt feverish and nauseated, but his excuses were futile. Sadly, he came to the realization that Paris had transformed his friend into a force of nature that would brook no opposition. That night, they dined in a little restaurant with a charcoal grill in the Rue Racine, where they were joined by the Spanish journalist, Paco Morral, who liked to imitate the Buenos Aires accent, very badly, and believed that Spanish cinema was far better than French cinema, much more dense, an opinion shared by Riquelme.

The meal went on much longer than anticipated, and Rousselot began to feel ill. When he returned to his hotel at four in the morning, he had a fever and began vomiting. He woke shortly before midday with the feeling that he had lived in Paris for many years. He went through the pockets of his jacket looking for the cell phone that he had managed to extract from Riquelme, and called Morini. A woman—the one who had previously spoken to Riquelme, he supposed—answered and told him that M. Morini had left that morning to spend a few days with his parents. Rousselot's first thought was that she was lying, or that before his hurried departure the director had lied to her. He said he was an Argentine journalist who wanted to interview Morini for a well-known magazine with a big circulation, widely read all over Latin America, from Argentina to Mexico. The only problem, he alleged, was that he had limited time, since he had to fly home in a couple of days. Humbly, he asked for the address of Morini's parents. He didn't have to insist. The woman listened politely, then gave him the name of a village in Normandy, a street, and a number.

Rousselot thanked her, then called Simone. No one was home. Suddenly, he realized that he didn't even know what day it was. He thought of asking one of the hotel staff, but felt embarrassed. He called Riquelme. A hoarse voice answered. Rousselot asked him about the village where Morini's parents lived: did he know where it was? "Who's Morini?" Riquelme asked. Rousselot had to remind him and explain part of the story again. "No idea," Riquelme said, and hung up. After feeling annoyed for a while, Rousselot told himself that it was better that way, if Riquelme had lost interest in the whole business. Then he packed his suitcases and went to the train station.

The trip to Normandy was long enough for him to go back over what he had done since arriving in Paris. An absolute zero lit up in his mind, then delicately disappeared forever. The train stopped in Rouen. Other Argentines, and Rousselot himself in other circumstances, would have set off at once to explore the town, like bloodhounds on Flaubert's trail. But he didn't even leave the station; he waited twenty minutes for the train to



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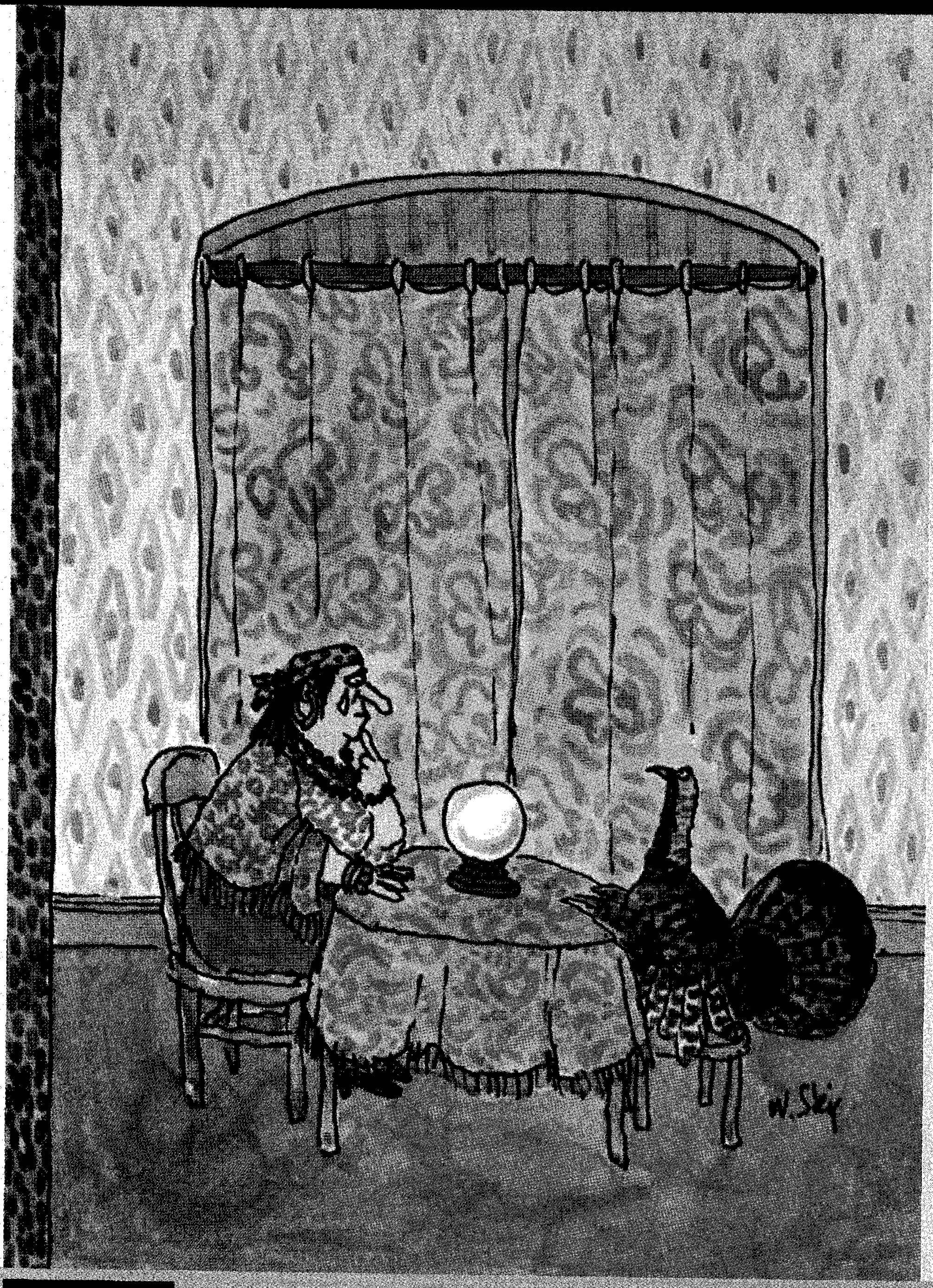

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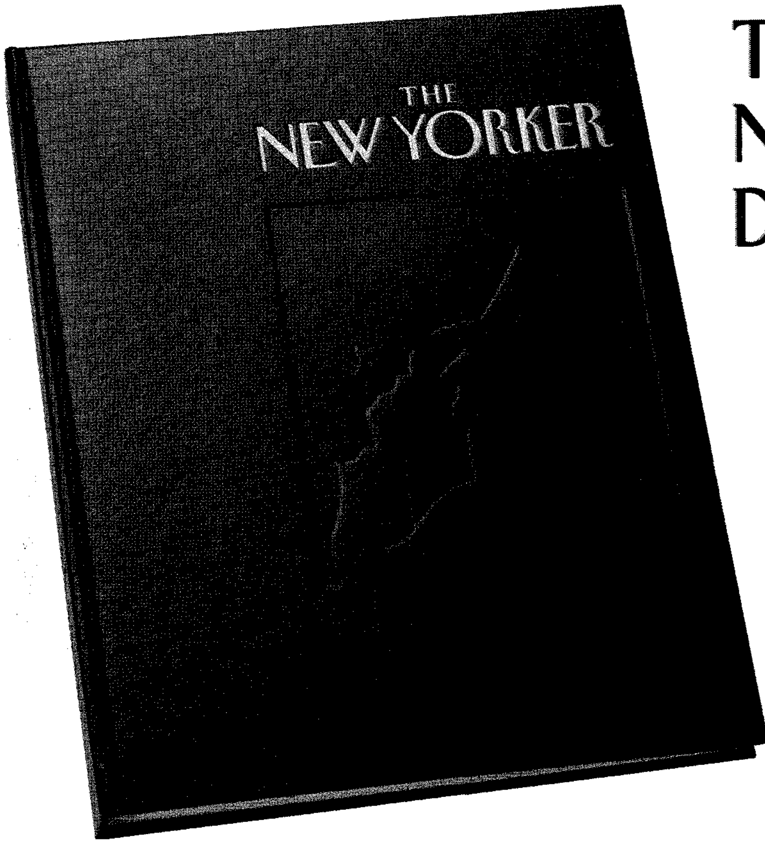
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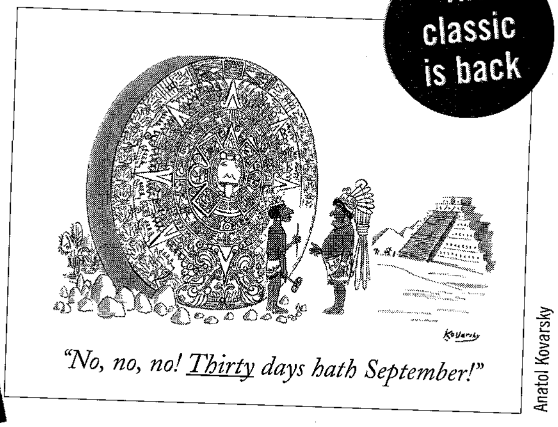

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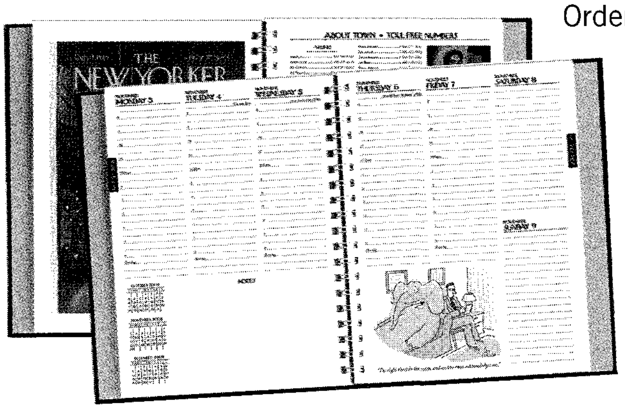
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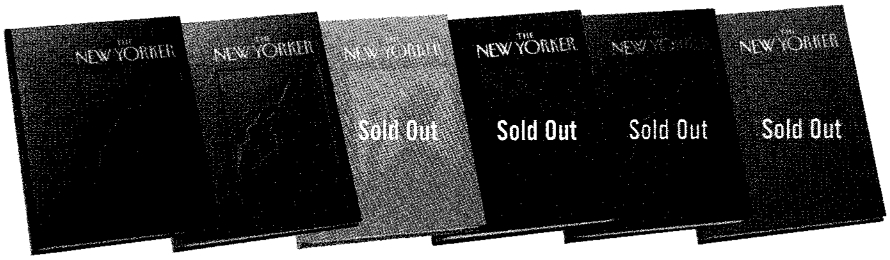
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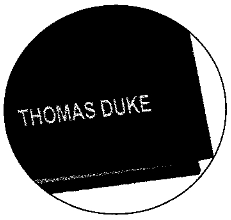
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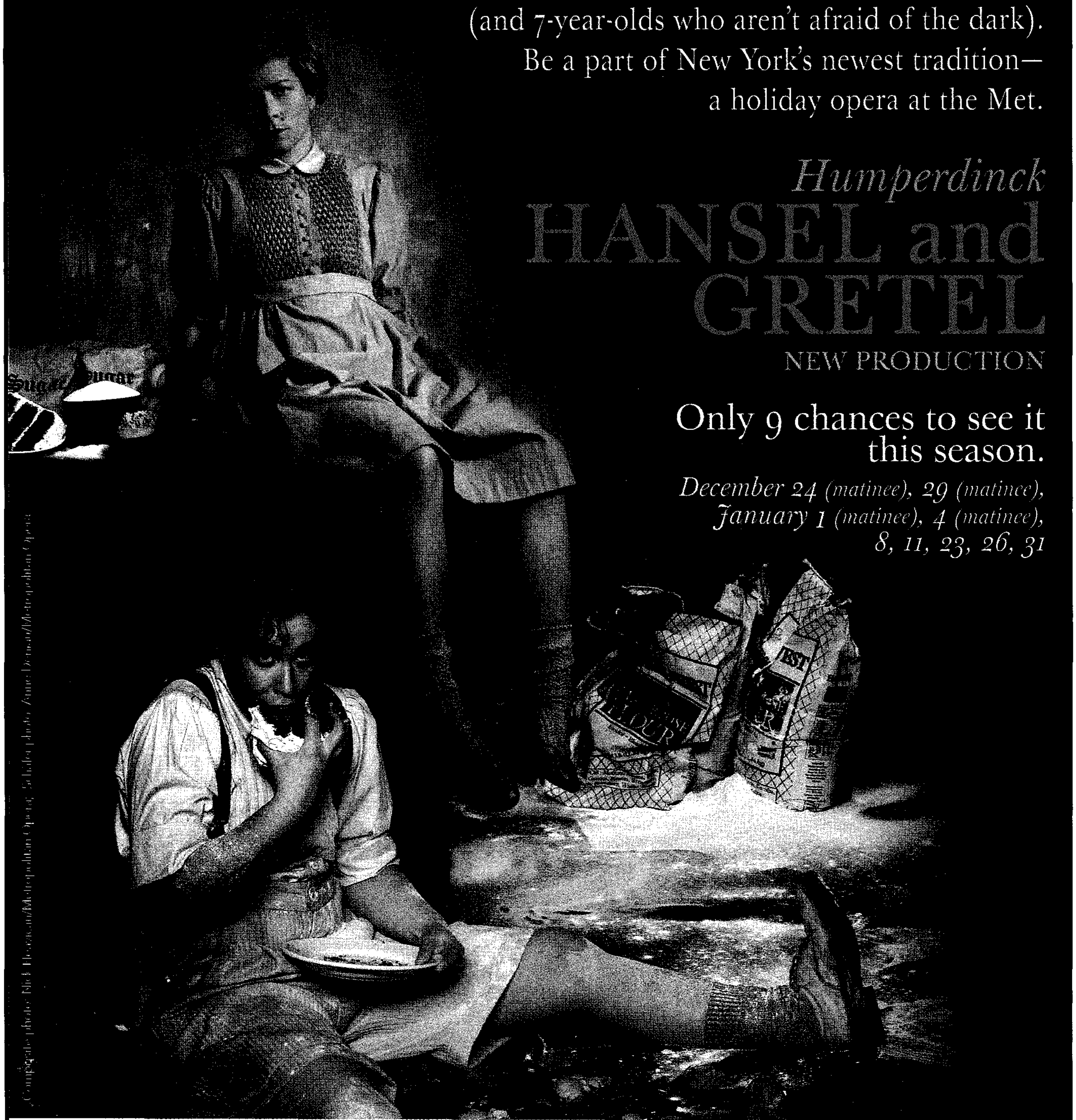

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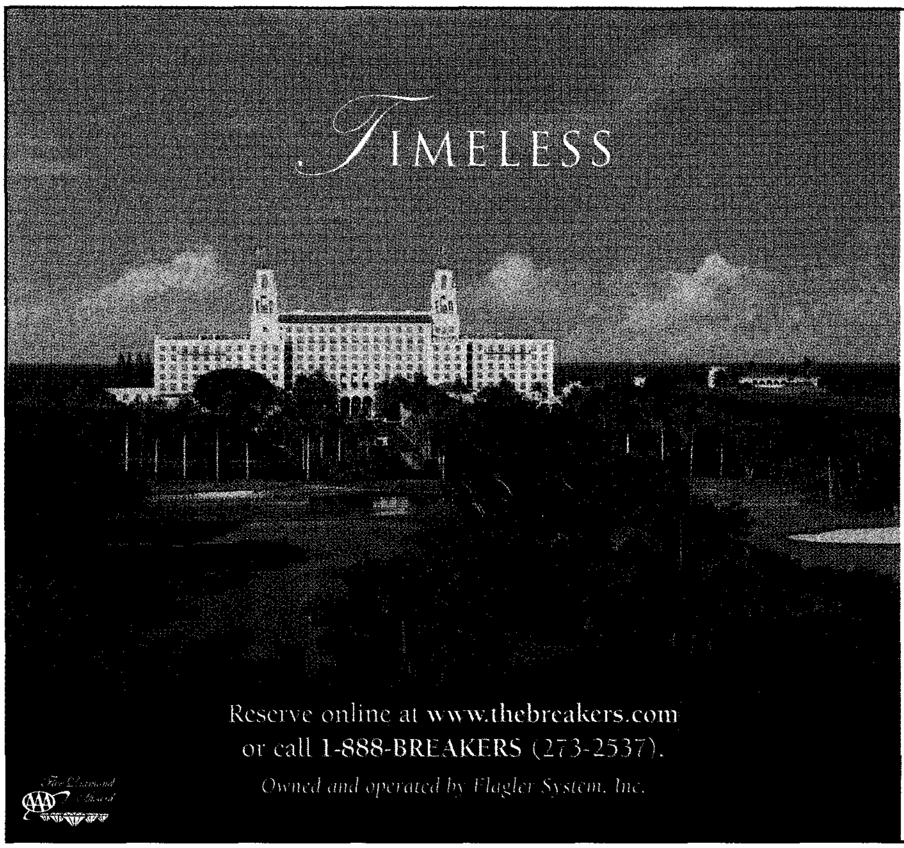

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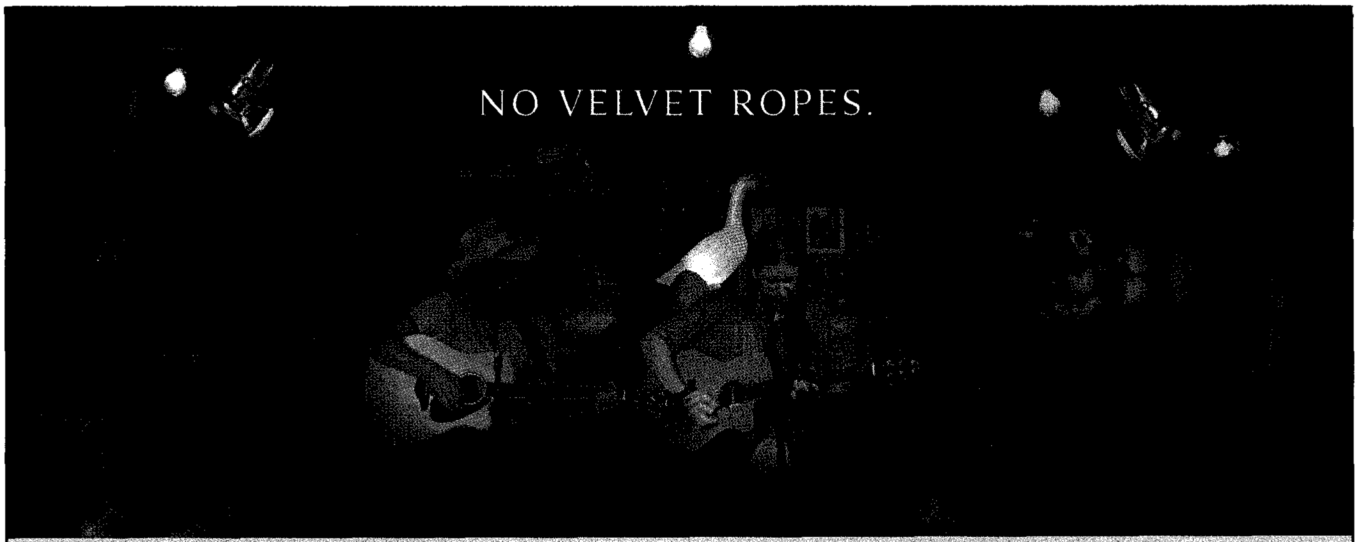
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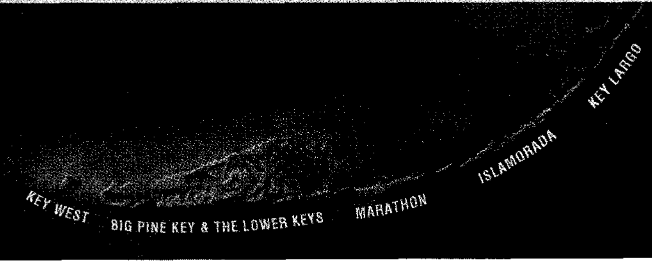
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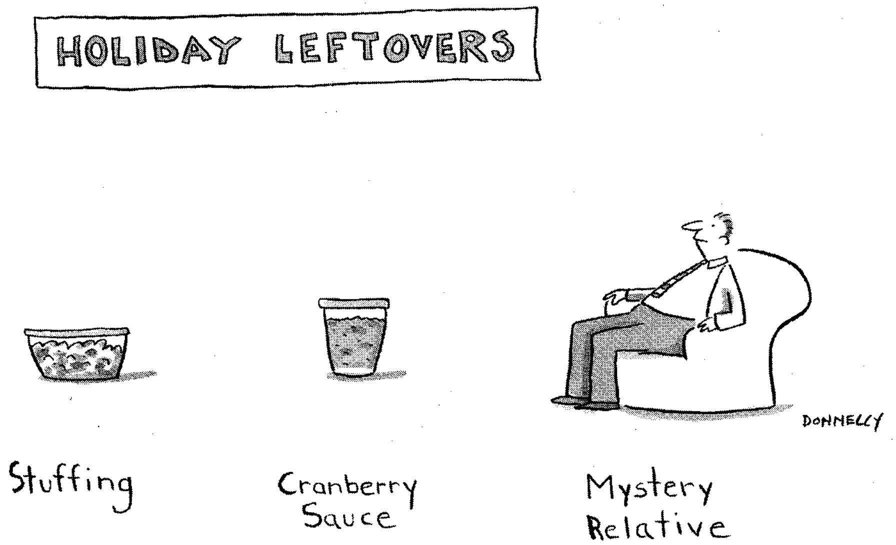

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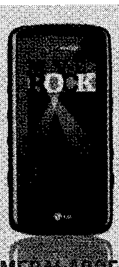
Caen, thinking of Simone, who personified the grace of French women, and of Riquelme and his odd journalist friend, both of whom were, in the end, more interested in rummaging through their own failures than in anyone else's story, however singular, which, come to think of it, was not so unusual—normal, in fact. People are only interested in themselves, he concluded gravely.

From Caen, he took a taxi to Le Hamel. He was surprised to find that the address he had been given in Paris corresponded to a hotel. The hotel had four stories and was not without a certain charm, but it was closed for the winter. For half an hour, Rousselot walked around in the vicinity, wondering if the woman who lived with Morini had sent him on a wild goose chase, until eventually he began to feel tired and headed for the port. In a bar, he was told that he'd be very lucky to find a hotel open in Le Hamel. The owner, a cadaverously pale guy with red hair, suggested he go to Arromanches, unless he wanted to sleep in one of the auberges that stayed open all year round. Rousselot thanked him and went looking for a taxi.

He booked himself into the best hotel he could find in Arromanches, a pile made of brick, stone, and wood, which creaked in the gusting wind. Tonight I will dream of Proust, he thought. Then he called Simone and talked to the old lady who looked after her child. "Madame won't be home until after four. She has an orgy tonight," the woman said. "A what?" Rousselot asked. The woman repeated the sentence. My God, Rousselot thought, and hung up without saying goodbye. To make things worse, that night he didn't dream of Proust but of Buenos Aires, where thousands of Riquelmes had taken up residence in the Argentine branch of PEN, all armed with tickets to Paris, all cursing or shouting a name, the name of someone or something that Rousselot couldn't recognize, a tongue-twister, perhaps, or a password they were trying to keep secret, although it was gnawing at their insides.

The next morning at breakfast, Rousselot was stunned to discover that he had no money left. Le Hamel was three or four kilometres from Arromanches; he decided to walk. To raise his spirits, he told himself that on D Day the Allied soldiers had landed on these beaches. But his spirits remained as low as could be, and although he had thought it might take half an hour, in the end it took him more than twice that time to reach Le Hamel. On the way, he started adding things up, remembering how much money he had brought with him to Europe, how much he'd had left when he arrived in Paris, how much he had spent on meals, on Simone (quite a lot, he thought, melancholically), on Riquelme, on taxis (they've been ripping me off the whole time!), and wondering whether he could have been robbed at some point without realizing it. The only people who could have done that, he concluded gallantly, were the Spanish journalist and Riquelme. And the idea didn't seem absurd in those surroundings, where so many lives had been lost.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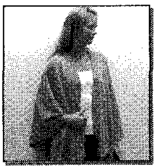
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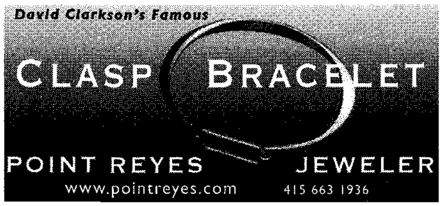
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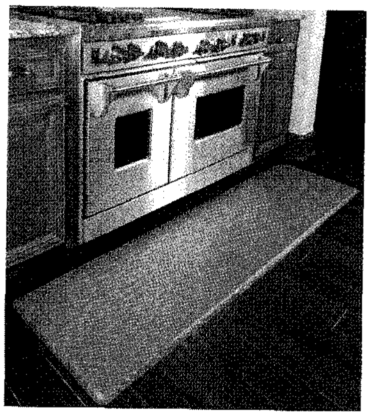

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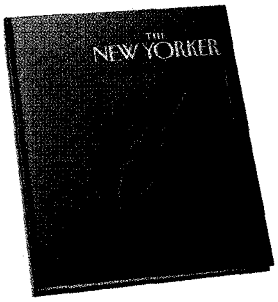

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He observed Morini's hotel from the beach. Anyone else would have given up by now, he thought. For anyone else, circling around that hotel would have been as good as admitting to idiocy, or to a sort of degeneration that Rousselot thought of as Parisian, or cinematic, or even literary, although for him the word "literary" retained all its original lustre, or some of it, at least. In his situation, anyone else would have been calling the Argentine Embassy, inventing a credible lie, and borrowing some money to pay the hotel bill. But, instead of gritting his teeth and making the phone call, Rousselot rang the hotel's doorbell and was not surprised to hear the voice of an old woman who, leaning out of one of the windows on the second floor, asked him what he wanted and was not surprised by his reply: "I need to see your son." The old woman disappeared, and Rousselot waited by the door for what seemed like an eternity.

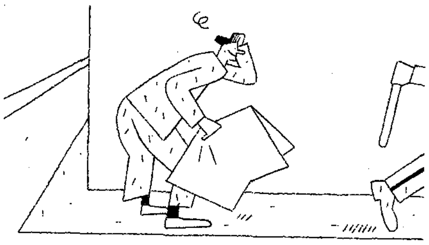
He kept checking his pulse and touching his forehead to see if he had a fever. When the door finally opened, he saw a lean, rather swarthy face, with large bags under the eyes; it was, he judged, the face of a degenerate, and it was vaguely familiar. Morini invited him in. "My parents have been working as caretakers of this hotel for more than thirty years," he said. They sat down in the lobby, where the armchairs were protected from dust by enormous sheets embroidered with the hotel's monogram. On one wall, Rousselot saw an oil painting of the beaches of Le Hamel, with bathers in Belle Époque costumes, while on the opposite wall a collection of portraits of famous clients (or so he supposed) observed them from a zone taken over by mist. He shivered. "I am Álvaro Rousselot," he said, "the author of 'Solitude'—I mean, the author of 'Nights on the Pampas.'"

It took a few seconds for Morini to react, but then he leaped to his feet, let out a cry of terror, and disappeared down a corridor. Such a spectacular response was the last thing Rousselot had been expecting. His reaction was to remain seated, light a cigarette (the ash fell steadily onto the carpet), and think moodily of Simone and her son, and a café in Paris that served the best croissants he had ever tasted. Then he stood up and started calling Morini. "Guy," he called, rather hesitantly. "Guy, Guy, Guy."

Rousselot found Morini in an attic where the hotel's cleaning equipment was piled. He had opened the window and seemed to be hypnotized by the garden that surrounded the building, and by the neighboring garden, which belonged to a private house and was visible, in part, through dark latticework. Rousselot walked over and patted him on the back. Morini seemed smaller and more fragile than before. For a while, they both stood there looking at one garden, then the other. Then Rousselot wrote the address of his hotel in Paris and the address of the hotel where he was currently staying on a piece of paper and slipped it into the director's trouser pocket. He felt as if he had committed a reprehensible act, executed a reprehensible gesture, but then, as he was walking back to Arromanches, everything he had done in Paris, every gesture and action, seemed reprehensible, futile, senseless, and even ridiculous. I should kill myself, he thought as he walked along the seashore.

Back in Arromanches, he did what any reasonable person would have done as soon as he discovered that his money had run out. He called Simone, explained the situation, and asked her for a loan. The first thing Simone said was that she didn't want a pimp, to which Rousselot replied that he was asking for a loan, and that he was planning to repay it with thirty-per-cent interest, but then they both started laughing and Simone told him not to do anything, just stay put in the hotel, and in a few hours, as soon as she could borrow a car from one of her friends, she'd come and get him. She also called him *chéri* a few times, to which he responded by using the word *chérie*, which had never seemed so tender. For the rest of the day, Rousselot felt that he really was an Argentine writer, something he had begun to doubt over the previous days, or perhaps the previous years, partly because he was unsure of himself, but also because he was unsure about the possibility of an Argentine literature. ♦

(*Translated, from the Spanish, by Chris Andrews.*)



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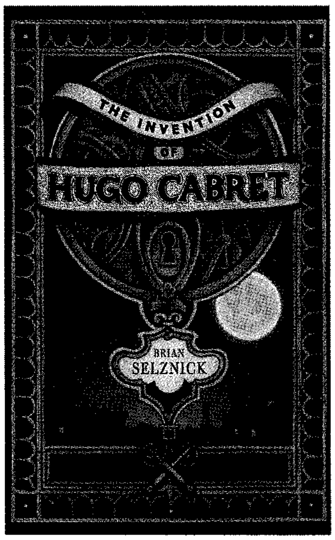

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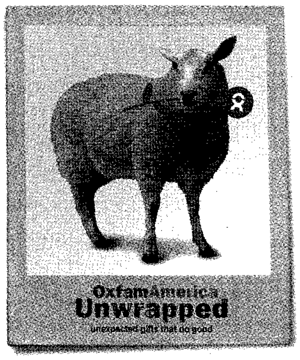

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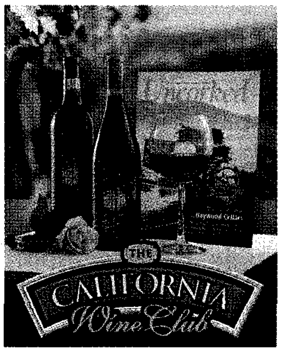

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THE CORNER OFFICE . . . AT 35,000 FEET

Premium-cabin seats on American Airlines' 777 jetliners—flagships of the fleet and the largest planes aloft—are more conducive to business than ever before. Both Business Class and First Class sections have undergone major upgrades with new seats and surroundings. Passengers can work and meet as well as read, watch a movie, and sleep in unsurpassed comfort.

Jim Hadden, American Airlines' manager of cabin design onboard products, explains, "The concept was to make the front of the plane more like a corporate jet, a place passengers could use as an office in the sky."

To guarantee that the new sections would function as designed, Hadden's team worked with a full-scale mockup of the nose of the cabin. "We had people sit in it, eat in it, sleep in it, to make sure we were getting it right." Once they did, American began rolling out First-Class Flagship Suites, which were followed by next generation Business Class seats.

TAKE A SEAT IN BUSINESS CLASS

Fully adjustable seats allow passengers to sit, recline, and stretch out with ease. When an ideal position is attained, the chair's memory button will hold it. Passengers in the upright position can shift forward as much as ten inches, bringing them closer to the seat-back tray table and personal media player screen. For added privacy, seats are enclosed by a fixed shell with a divider that creates an individual travel space. Easy-to-access power ports, good lighting, new menus, and award-winning wines all contribute to making the 777's Business Class experience a desirable berth on long-haul flights.

TAKE A SUITE IN FIRST CLASS

American Airlines' 777 Flagship Suites are arranged in a 1-2-1 configuration, so every seat is an aisle seat. Not only do they swivel—allowing for face-to-face meetings or dining—seats also rock, glide, recline, and can be transformed into a flat six-foot, six-inch bed.

Suites have interlocking tray tables that enlarge work (or dining) space and an ottoman that enables a companion to sit in front of one for a meeting. They also feature power ports, individual satellite phones, and a high-quality seat-back screen that presents audio and video entertainment and the news on demand.

Whether working, relaxing, or sleeping, American Airlines premium-class passengers now soar in comfort. These new cabin enhancements have been installed across all of American's 777s, which fly to cities in Europe, Latin America, and Asia as well as within select destinations in the United States.

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night night. lights out. hey this thing goes all the way flat. now i can sleep on my side. on my other side. on my - what's this? a duvet? what's a duvet? i don't know but man it's soft. and this pillow is plush. did i just say 'plush'? wow, i'm liking this new international business class on American.

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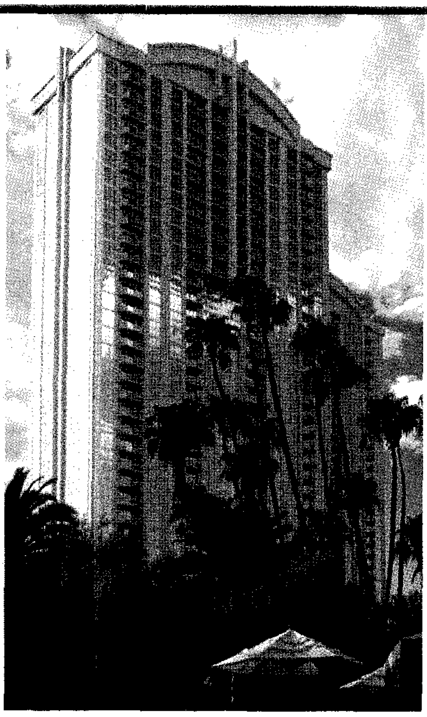

THE SIGNATURE AT MGM GRAND
TOWERING STANDARDS

The three golden towers of The Signature at MGM Grand offer much more than a distinctive change to the Las Vegas skyline. With this sanctuary-like addition to MGM Grand's portfolio, luxury comes with a spectacular view and the best of everything under one roof—from A-list entertainment and high-energy nightlife to award-winning restaurants and relaxing rejuvenation.

If you've stayed in Las Vegas in the past, you're familiar with the crowds at most hotels during check-in. Here, however, guests are given their key cards in a serene lobby off the private gated entrance.

The three adjacent towers of the Signature at MGM Grand offer 576 suites. Junior, one- and two-bedroom suites—only sixteen per floor—are designed to pamper guests with the highest caliber of amenities and comfort, including high-speed Internet access. Oversized marble-and-granite bathrooms feature a whirlpool tub, flat-screen TV, and the June Jacobs spa line of personal care products. In the bedrooms, a king-sized, pillow-top bed is swathed in Anichini linens. Each suite has either a kitchen or kitchenette, and most have a balcony, which is unusual for Las Vegas accommodations.

Services are intended to anticipate guests' every need. A concierge, bell staff, and a valet are all on twenty-four-hour call, and in-suite massages and same-day laundry and dry cleaning are available. The Signature also features a private lounge, a heated pool and cabanas, state-of-the-art fitness centers, a deli, and a Starbucks coffee shop.

The tranquil environment of The Signature juxtaposes the dynamic energy of nearby MGM Grand. Cirque du Soleil's KÀ combines heart-pounding acrobatic performances and martial arts in an astounding show, and there are a number of nightclubs and lounges where guests can toast the night away. Of note are Tabú Ultra Lounge, which has a chic, sophisticated feel, and Studio 54, which is a modern interpretation of the legendary club known for its lively atmosphere and edgy music.

Eighteen fine and casual dining options will please even the most discriminating palates. Recent additions include two restaurants by Joël Robuchon—the famed French chef who has been called "Chef of the Century." L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon presents the celebrated cuisine of the master chef in an accessible, informal style, while the eponymous Joël Robuchon provides an exclusive opportunity to experience the fullest expression of his cooking talents.

THE SIGNATURE AT MGM GRAND TOWERS IMAGE ©TAMMY LOH; ALL OTHER PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE SIGNATURE AT THE MGM GRAND

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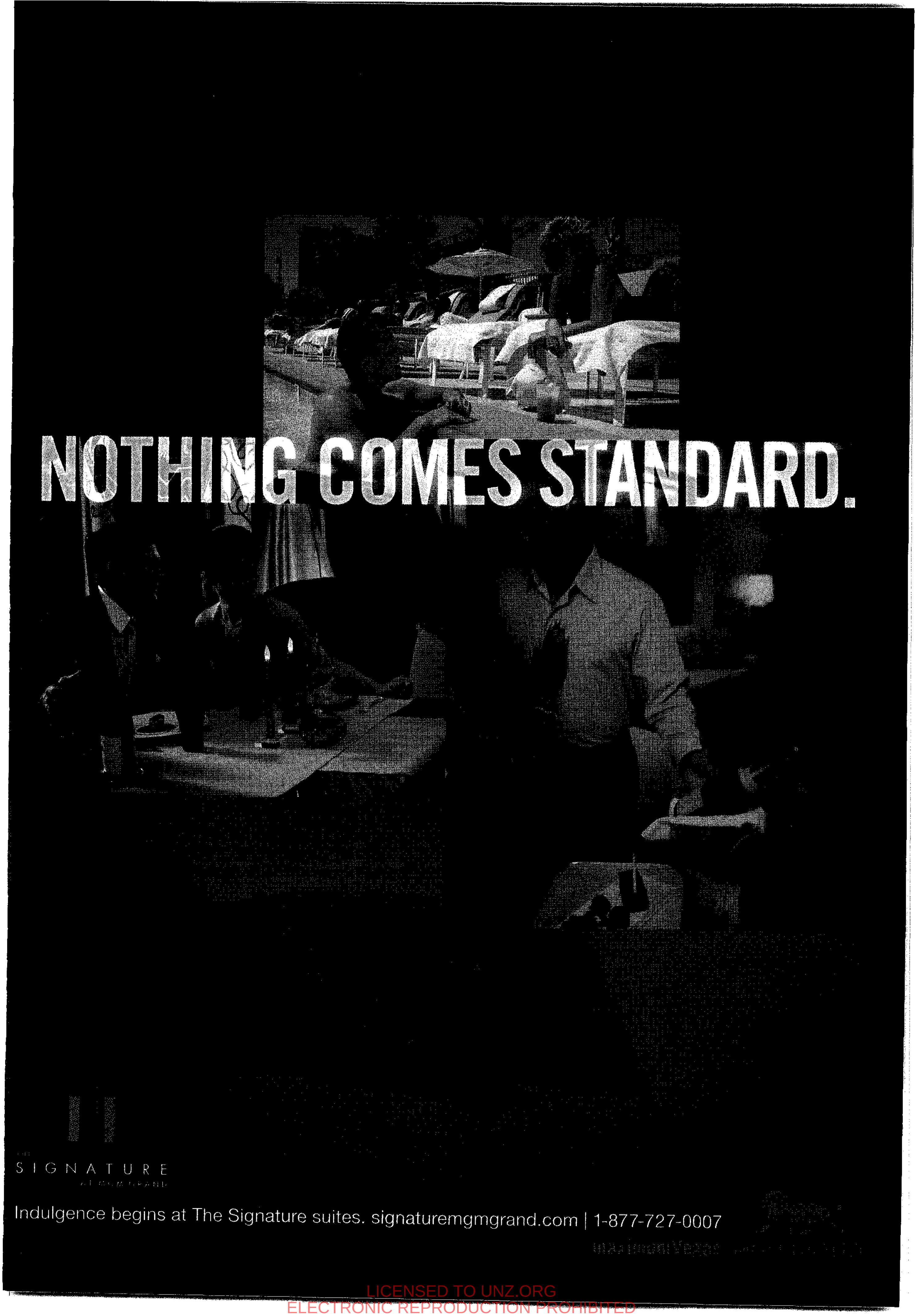
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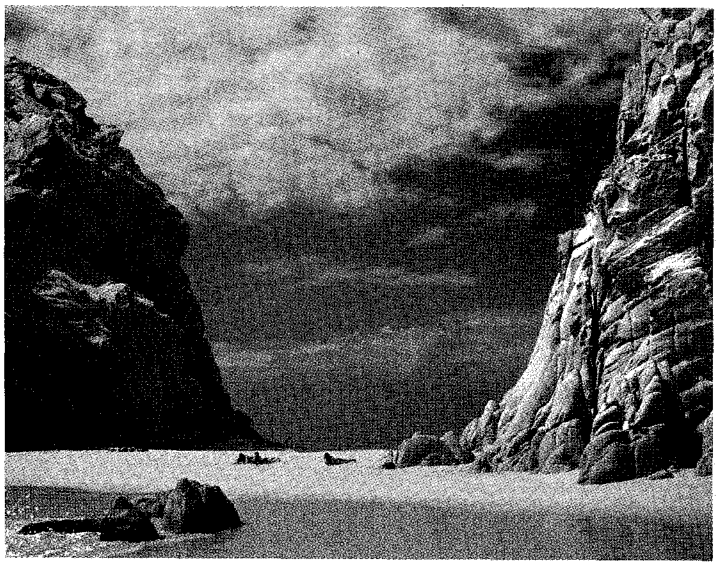
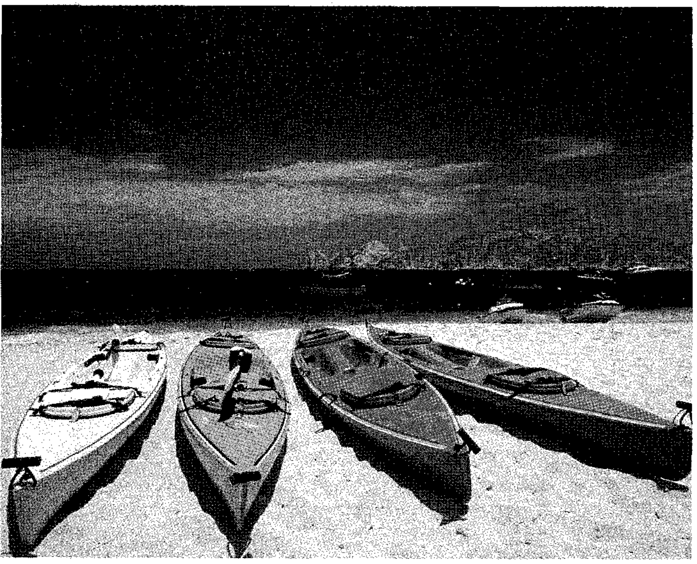
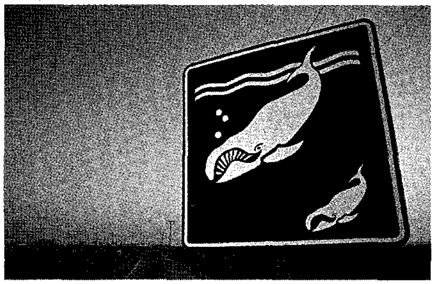




BAJA'S BEACHES BECKON

Mexico's Baja California Peninsula is shaped as if to maximize its main appeal: it's a narrow strip of land surrounded by hundreds of miles of coastline, like a finger beckoning travelers to its beaches. At the southern tip of the peninsula, Los Cabos—Spanish for "The Capes"—draws most of the region's sun-seeking visitors to the sandy beaches between its twin towns.

On the Pacific coast, **Cabo San Lucas** has earned a reputation as the livelier of the two destinations, with a vibrant night life and a variety of boating and fishing activities centered around its busy port. About twenty miles northeast, toward the Sea of Cortez (also called the Gulf of California), is **San José del Cabo**, considered the more subdued sibling, with narrow, pedestrian-friendly streets surrounding the town's traditional center of activity, the Plaza Mijares.



The main highway between the two destinations—known as the **Corredor Turístico**—passes by world-class restaurants, hotels, and resorts lining the region's many beaches, each with its own appeal to travelers interested in swimming, surfing, diving, fishing, or snorkeling.

Near the tip of Cabo San Lucas, **Playa del Amor** is one of the area's most popular secluded beaches, reachable by water taxi when the tide is low. It is hidden behind **El Arco**, an arch-shaped rock formation that has become the symbol of Los Cabos, standing sentry where the ocean meets the sea. Here, it's not uncommon to spot seals, sea lions, pelicans, and other birds. In the middle of Cabo San Lucas Bay, **El Medano** beach is the center of activity close to town. Its protected shoreline creates the ideal spot for swimming, kayaking, windsurfing, and other water sports, while beachfront bars, restaurants, and vendors offer lots of diversions on shore.

Along the Corridor, there's a beach to suit just about any taste for waterfront fun. **Playa Costa Azul** gets the breaks that attract surfers, while **El Chileno**, known for its palm trees and crystalline, calm waters, is perfect for swimming and snorkeling. With its white-sand beach, **Palmilla** is always a hit for family outings because of its recreational facilities and excellent waters for scuba diving, snorkeling, and fishing.

Los Cabos is also known for its sportfishing, luring anglers from all over the world hoping to catch big game such as sailfish, swordfish, and marlin. Guided fishing trips in ocean cruisers typically leave from the marina in Cabo San Lucas, but excursions in smaller *pangas* (skiffs) can also be arranged in **San José del Cabo**.

To catch sight of the ocean's biggest denizens, head about 200 miles north of Los Cabos to **Bahiá Magdalena** (Magdalena Bay), a breeding and calving ground for gray whales somewhere between January and March. Local outfitters offer whale-watching tours that promise close-up encounters with these magnificent creatures, which migrate thousands of miles from their Arctic habitats every year. Those annual visits may be the best proof that the Baja California Peninsula clearly has something special to offer travelers.

TOP LEFT: CABO SAN LUCAS © ALAMY; BEACHFRONT WITH KAYAKS AT CABO SAN LUCAS © ALAMY; *BOTTOM LEFT:* ON THE WAY TO MAGDALENA BAY © GETTY

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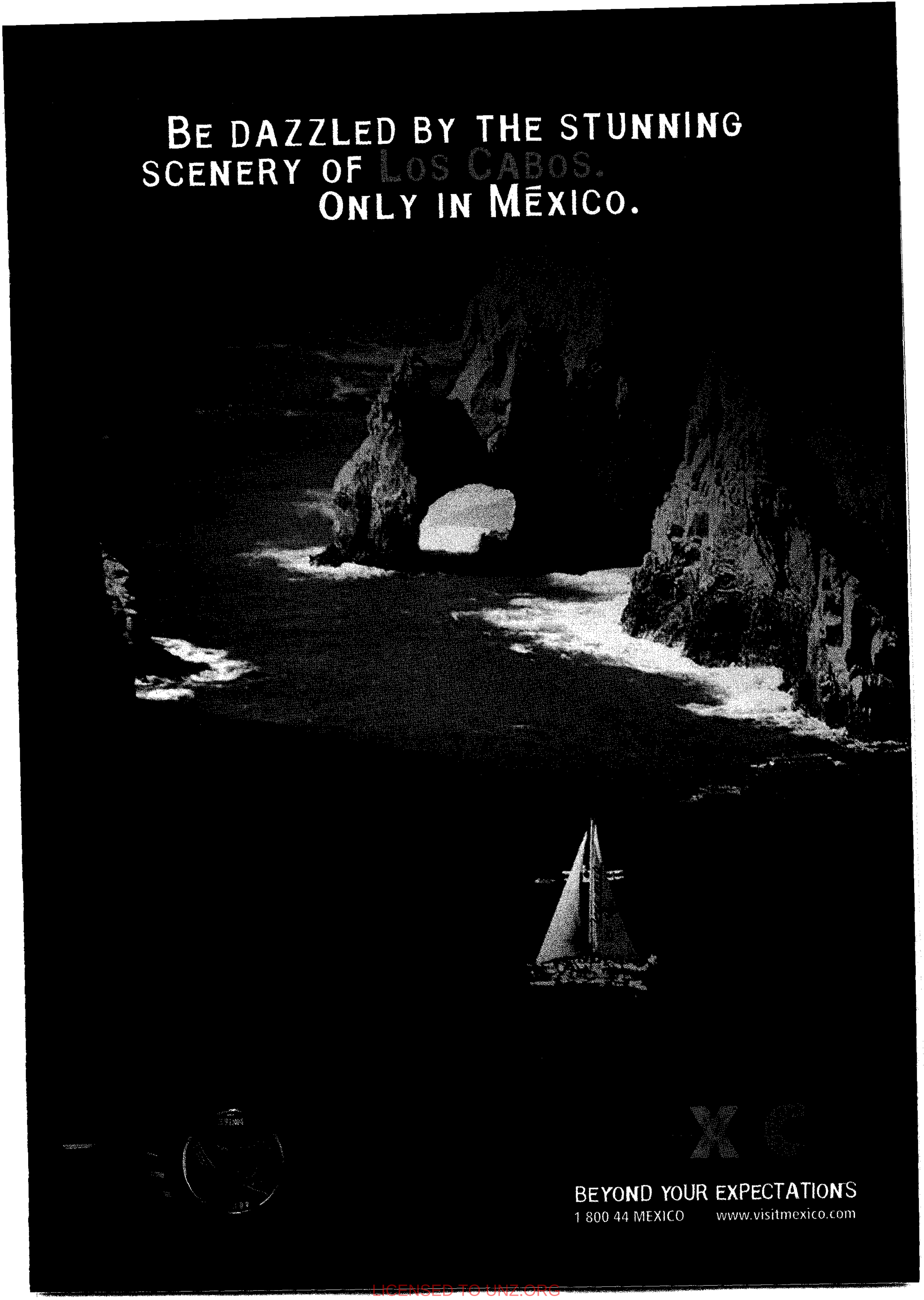
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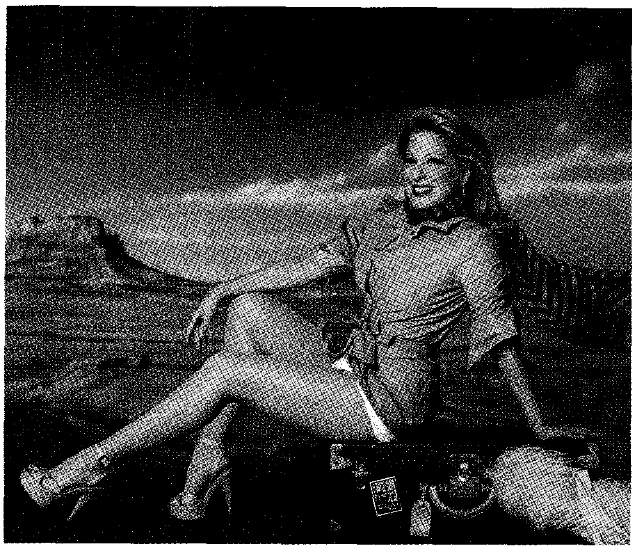
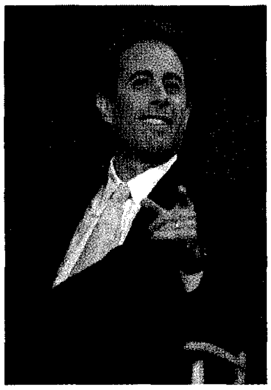


STAR PERFORMERS PACK '08 CALENDAR

Caesars Palace was dubbed the Home of Champions after hosting decades of events like boxing matches, auto races, and volleyball tournaments. But did you know that Caesars Palace has also been Las Vegas's epicenter for big-name entertainment since opening day?

The ninety-five-million-dollar, state-of-the-art Colosseum is the premier performance venue at Caesars Palace. It was built especially for Céline Dion, with breathtaking sightlines and stunning acoustics. It opened in 2003, hosting a wildly popular five-year run of her groundbreaking concert performance spectacular, "A New Day." Created by Cirque du Soleil mastermind Franco Dragone, this show changed the definition of what a Vegas headline act could be.

Céline takes her final bow on December 15th, but 2008 promises to be the best year ever on the stages of Caesars Palace. Three of the biggest stars in the world will descend upon the world-class Colosseum as performers-in-residence.



Elton John continues the run of his critically acclaimed show "The Red Piano," which puts some of rock and roll's most enduring classics in all-new contexts with vintage Vegas signage and vivid video imagery created by photographic genius David LaChapelle.

One of entertainment's best-known and best-loved comedians, Jerry Seinfeld, is another Caesars Palace exclusive. Throughout the year, Seinfeld brings his unmistakable and distinctive style of observational comedy to The Colosseum for an evening of quirky comedy and big laughs.

The most recent star-studded event at Caesars Palace was The Comedy Festival's third edition, held from November 14th through November 17th at venues all across the resort. Chris Rock and The Colosseum's own Jerry Seinfeld headlined with back-to-back standup sets and were joined by a who's who of comedy—including Ellen DeGeneres, Eddie Izzard, and Wanda Sykes.

Then there's the newest addition to the Caesars Palace stable of stars: the Divine Miss M, Bette Midler. Bawdy, bold, and brassy, this one-of-a-kind performer opens her show at Caesars Palace in February. Tickets are currently on sale, and her performance is guaranteed to be full of gags, guffaws, and girls.

From the earliest days of Caesars Palace, diverse headliners enthusiastically played here. It was a must-see destination for entertainment aficionados from the day the resort opened, when legendary vocalist Andy Williams played to a packed house. The Circus Maximus theatre featured the biggest stars of its time in the years that followed—an era that lasted nearly four decades.

Over the years, the entertainment lineup at Caesars Palace has only strengthened. Look for 2008 to be a year of smash hits, standing ovations, and perhaps a few surprises.

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: CAESARS PALACE GRAND ENTERANCE; BETTE MIDLER; JERRY SEINFELD; PHOTOS COURTESY OF CAESARS PALACE

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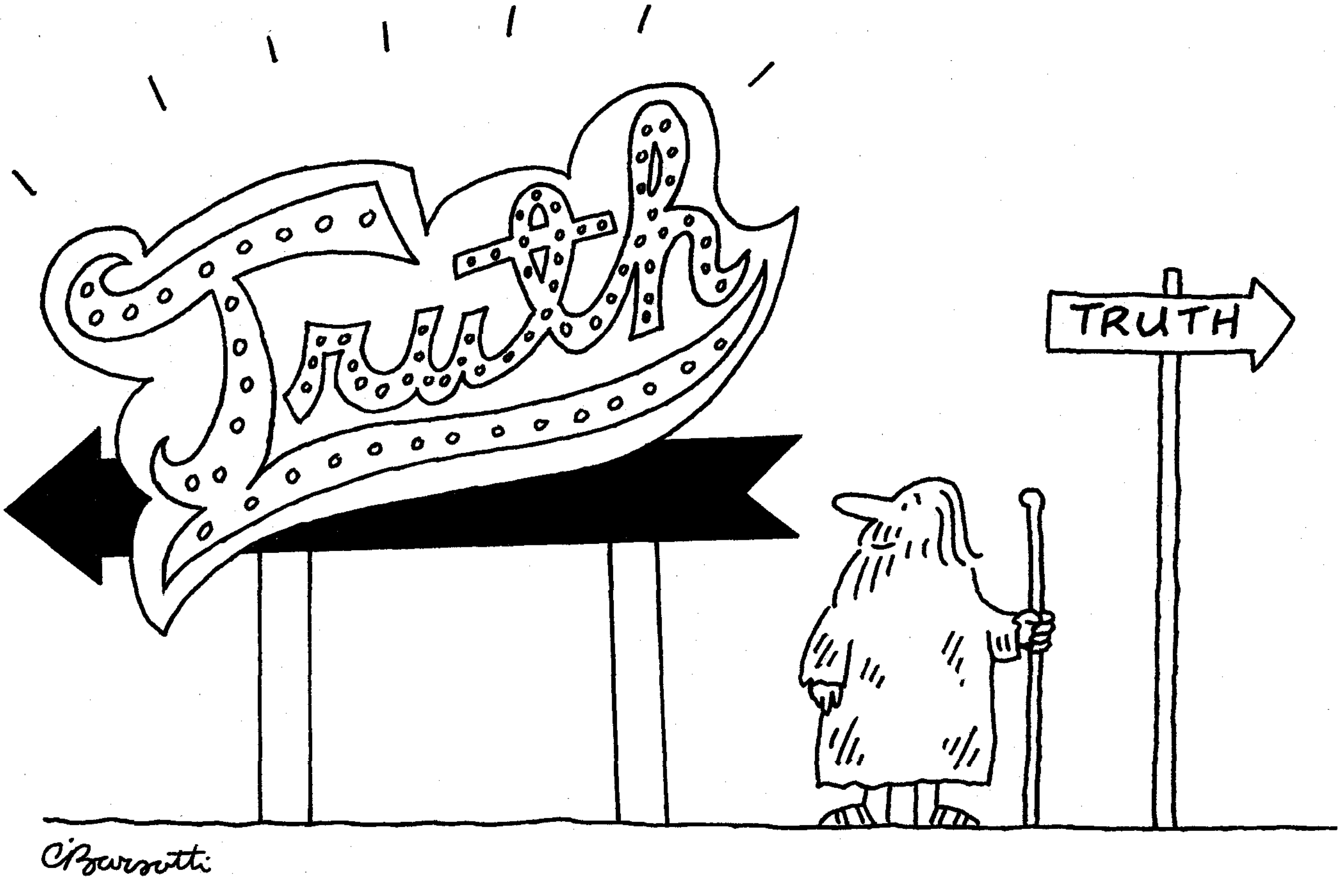
THE FUNNIES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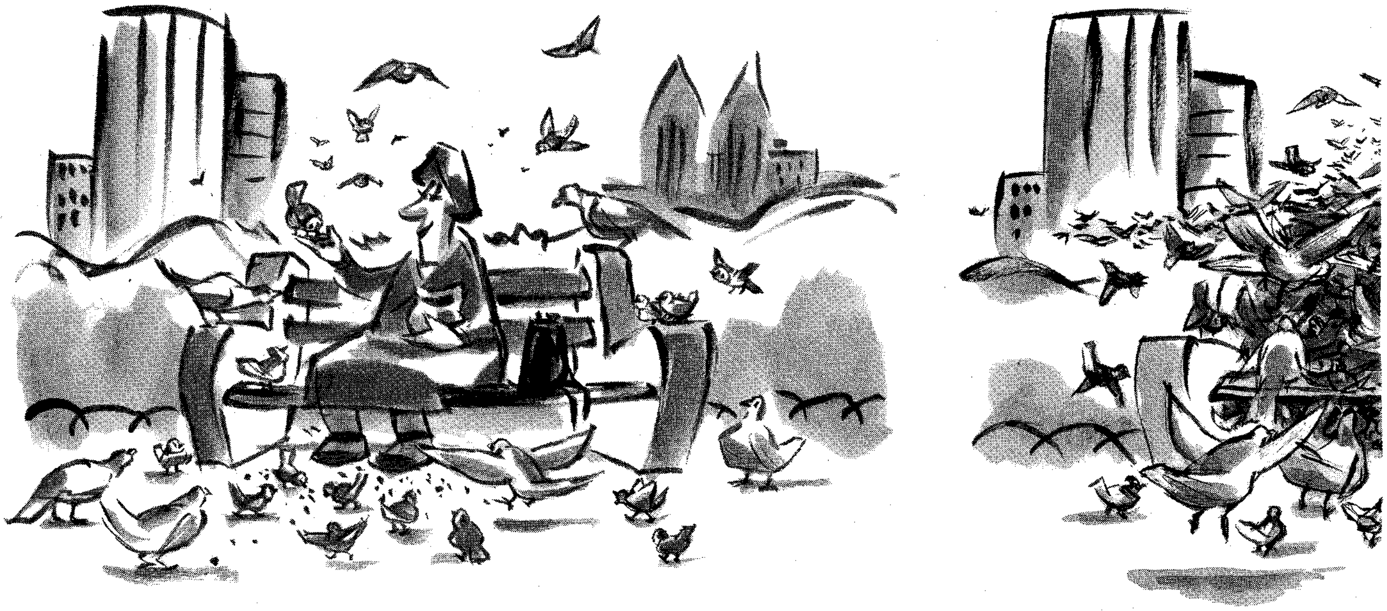
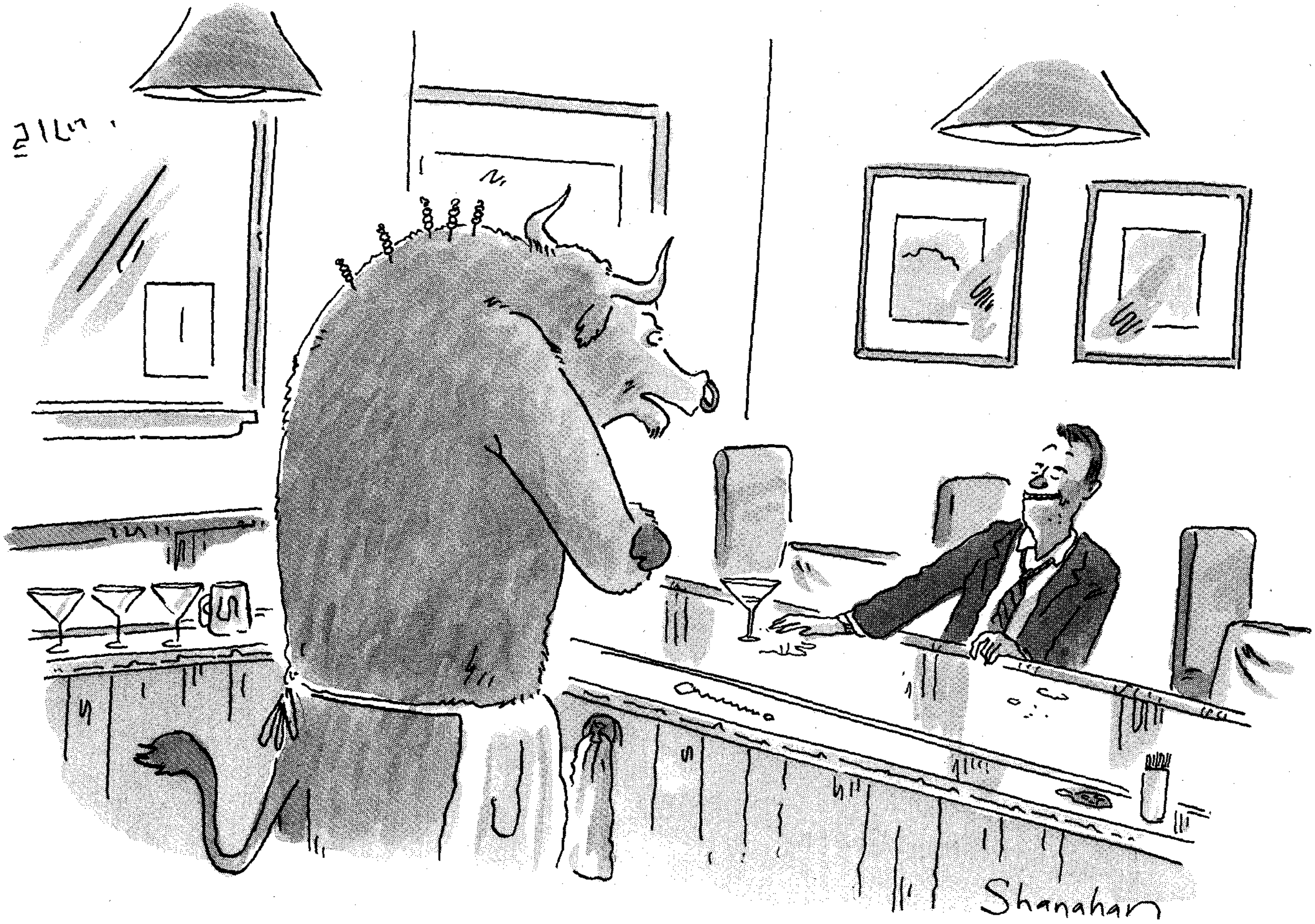
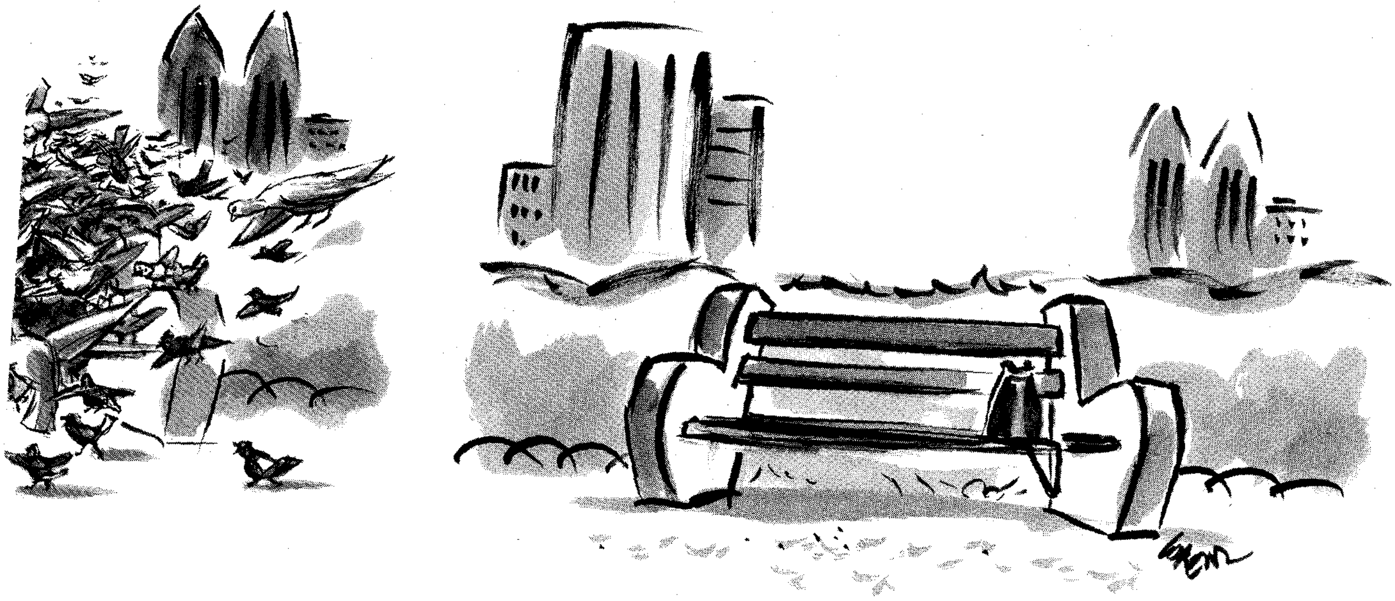
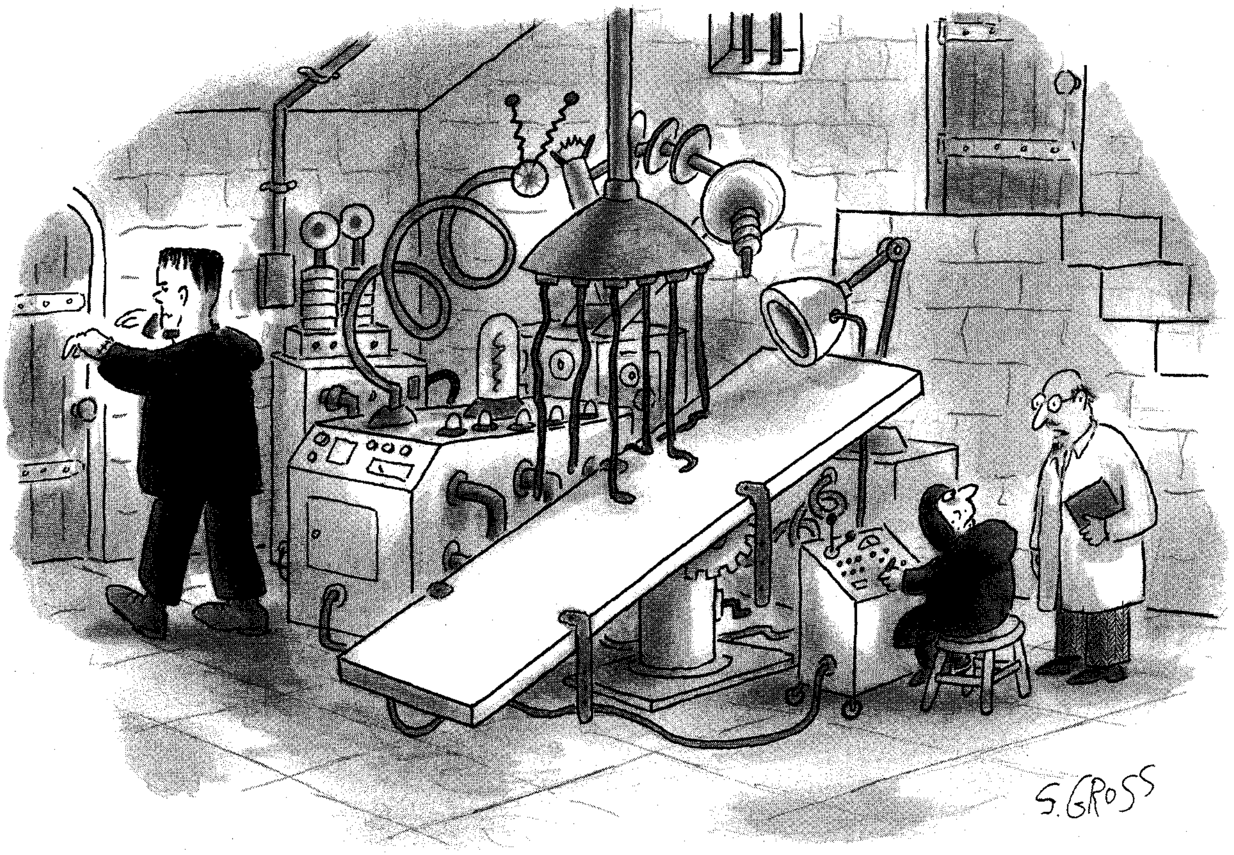


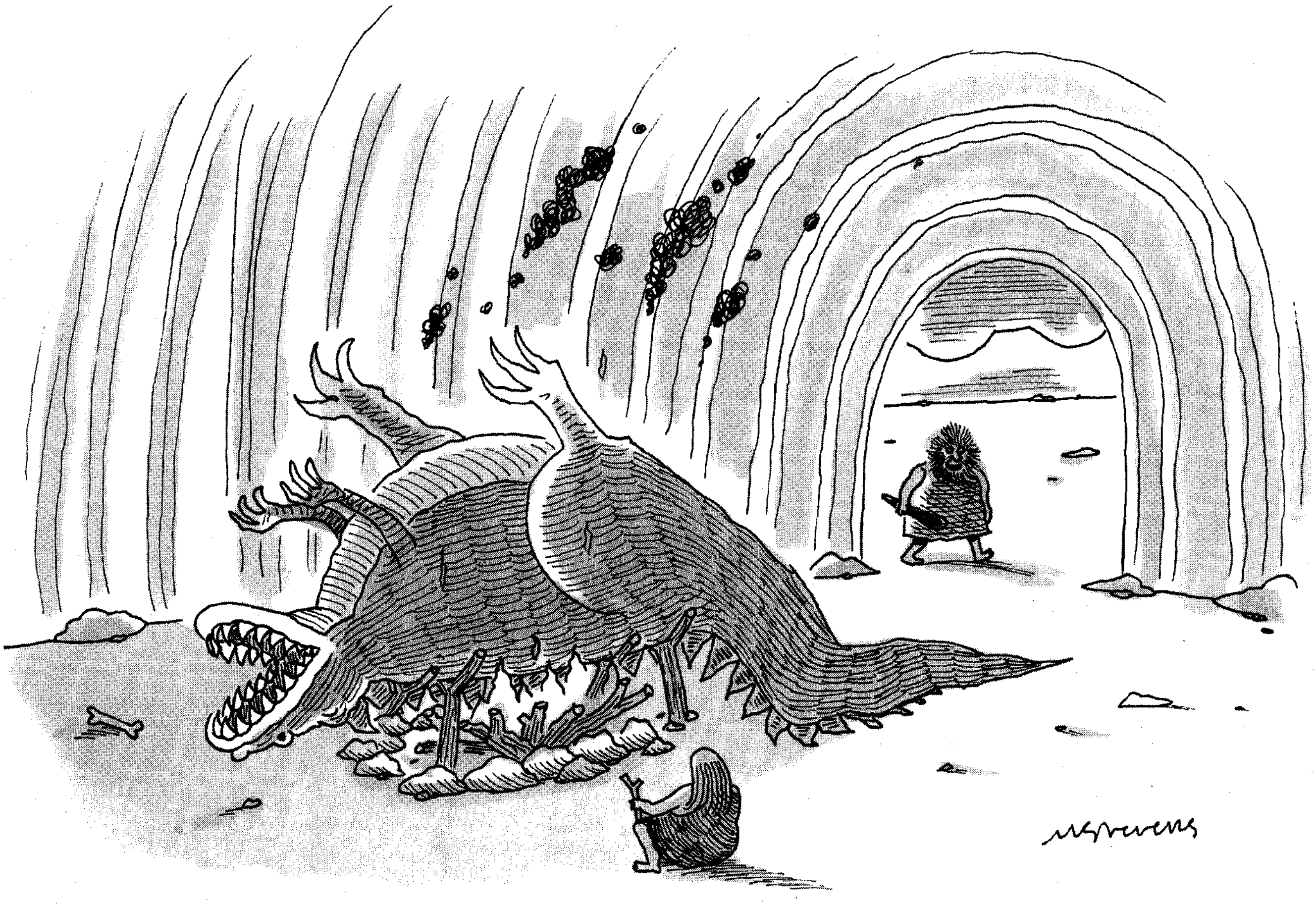


"You've had enough."

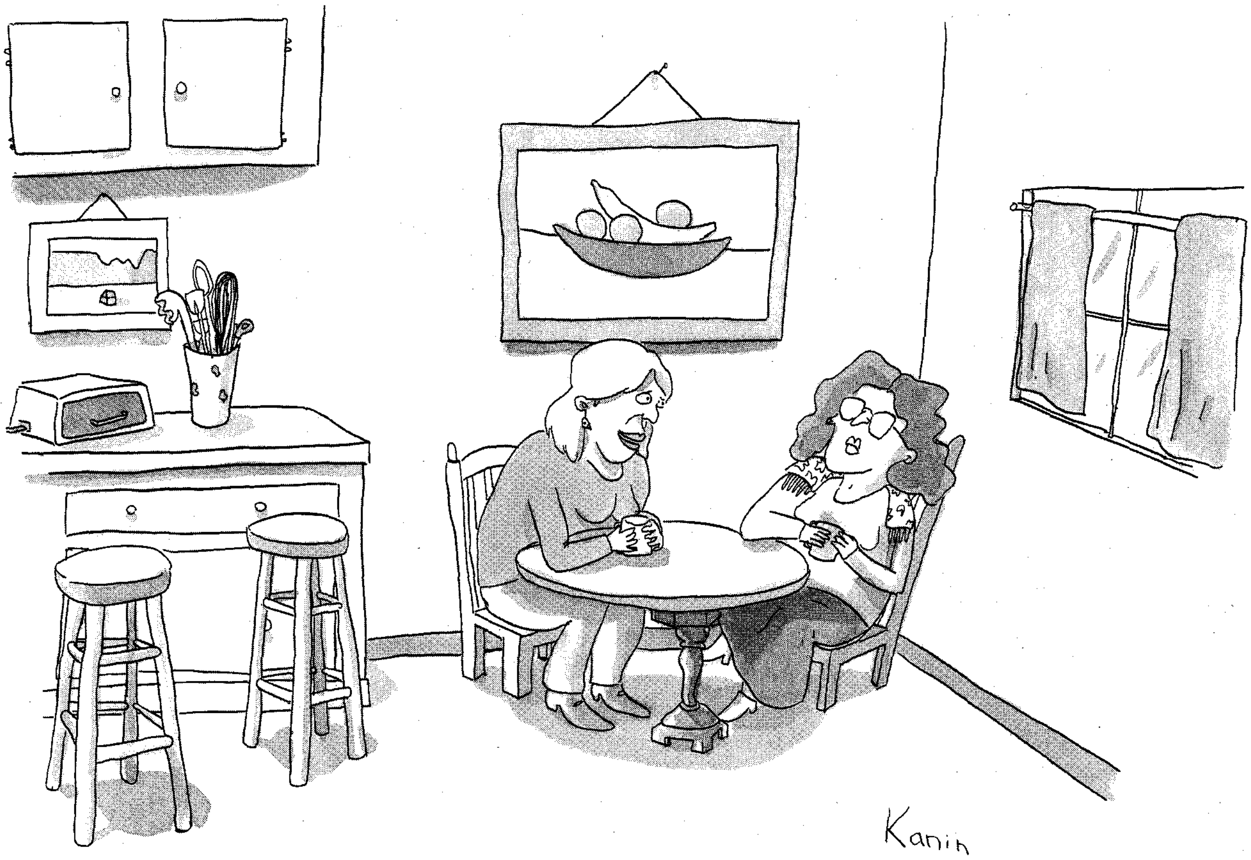




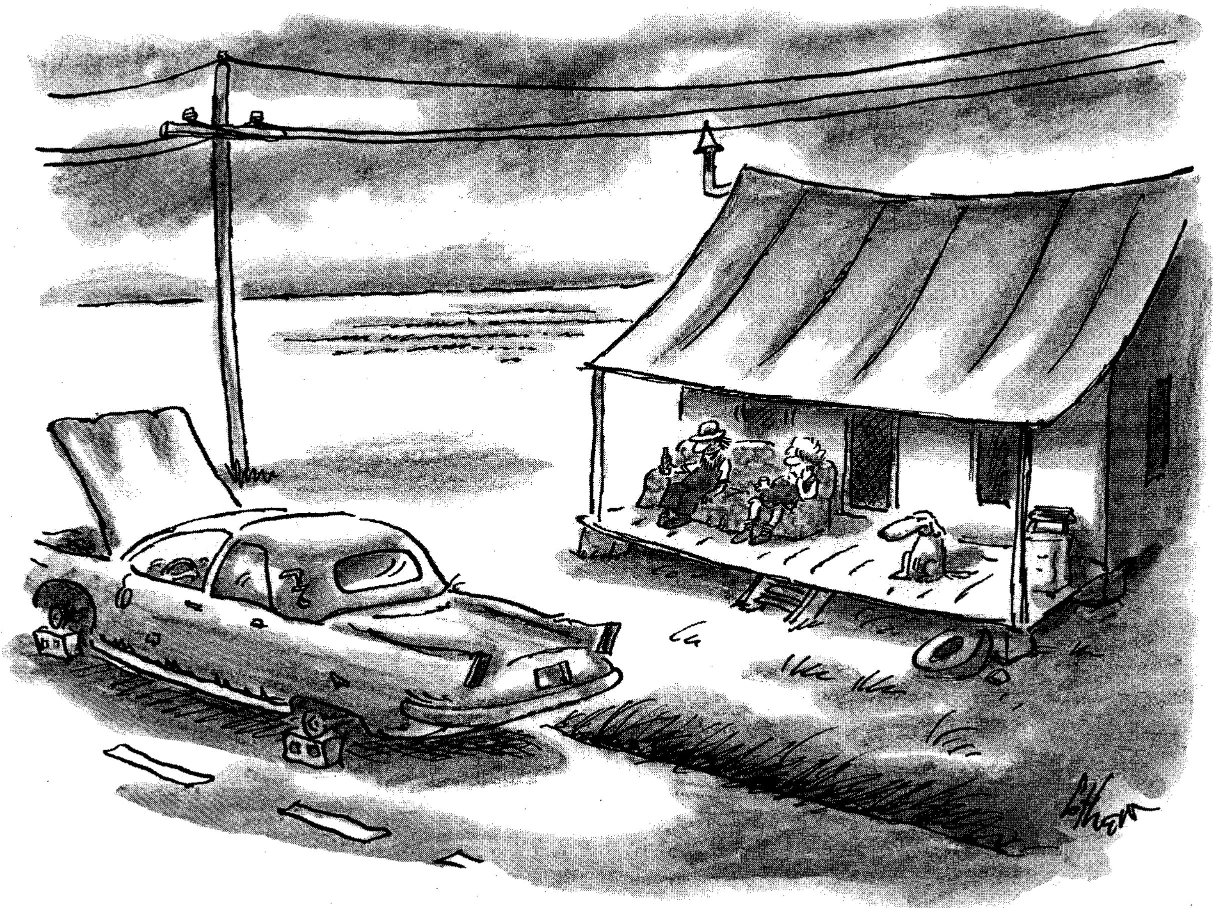
"He goes to the bathroom a lot. Where did you get the kidneys?"



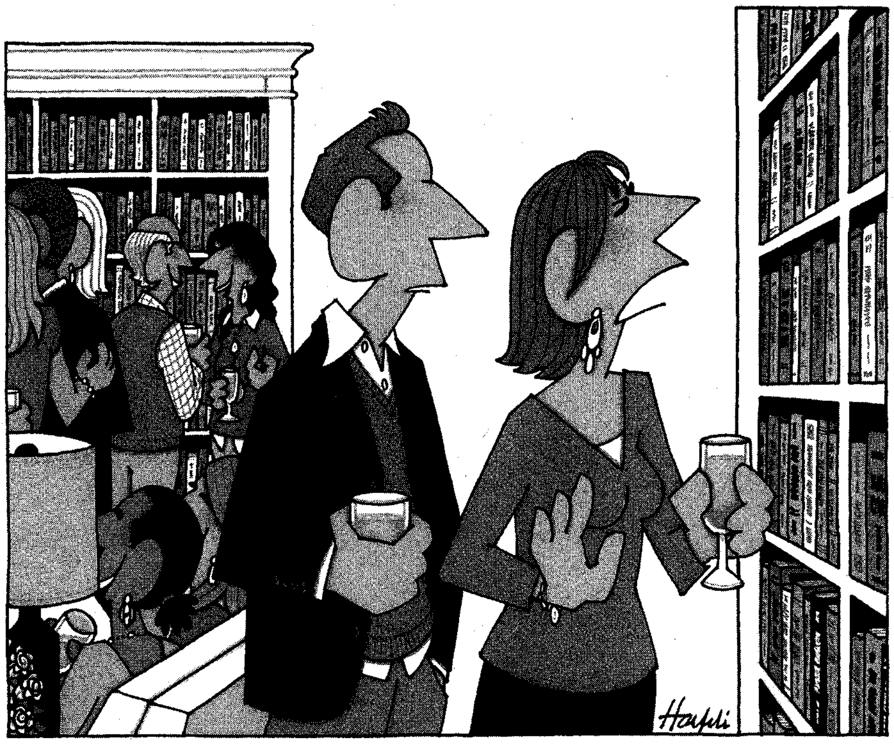
"Hey! Something smells good!"



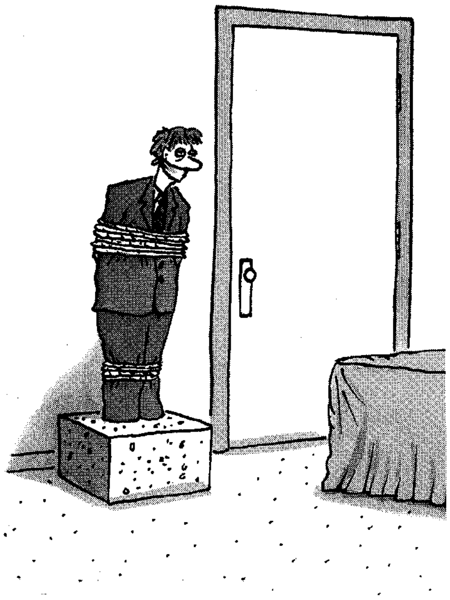
"It's actually pretty funny—I like the room very warm at night, and he likes to sleep with other women."

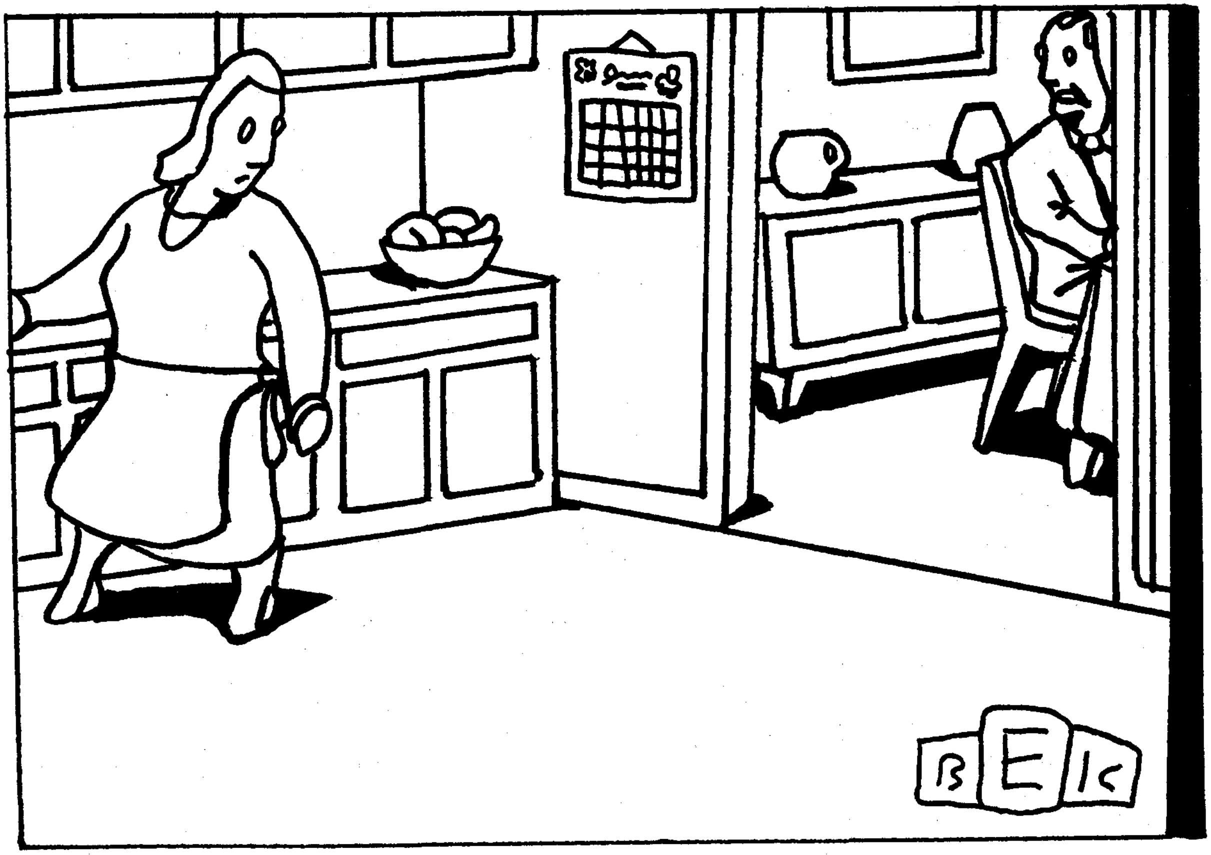


"After thirty years, that old car of mine is still on the road."

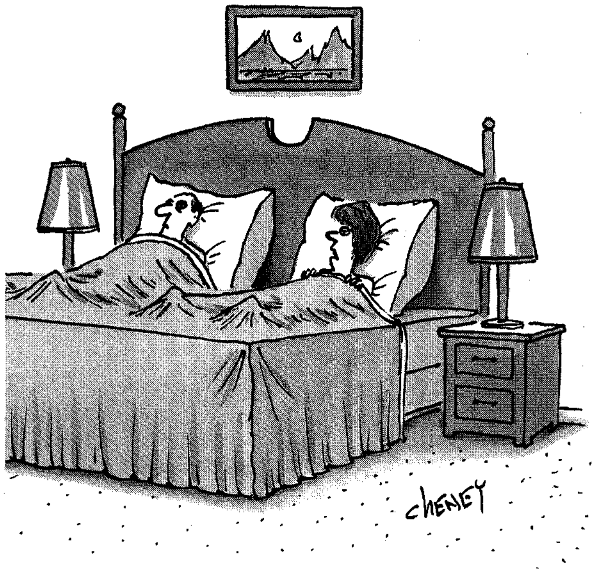


"We're not leaving until I find every book we ever gave them."

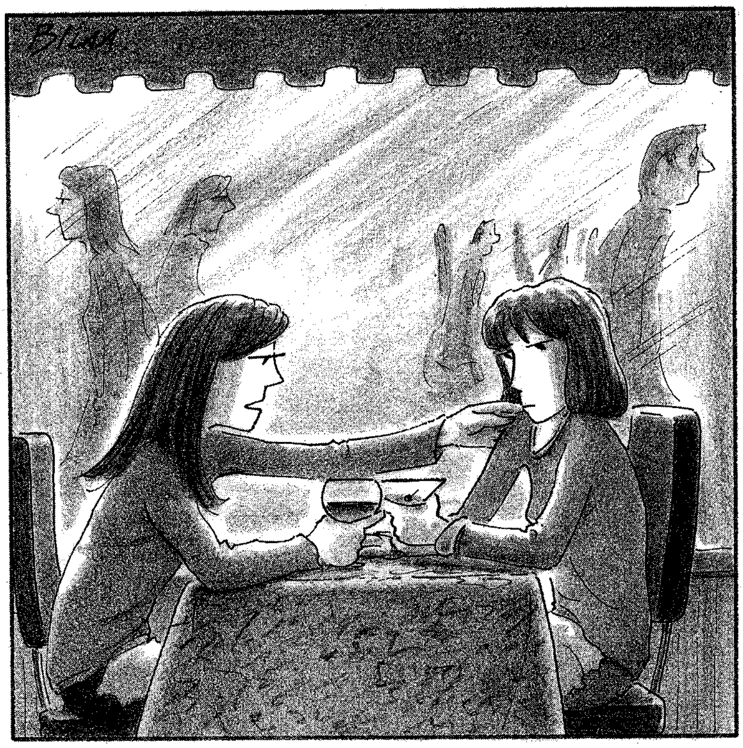




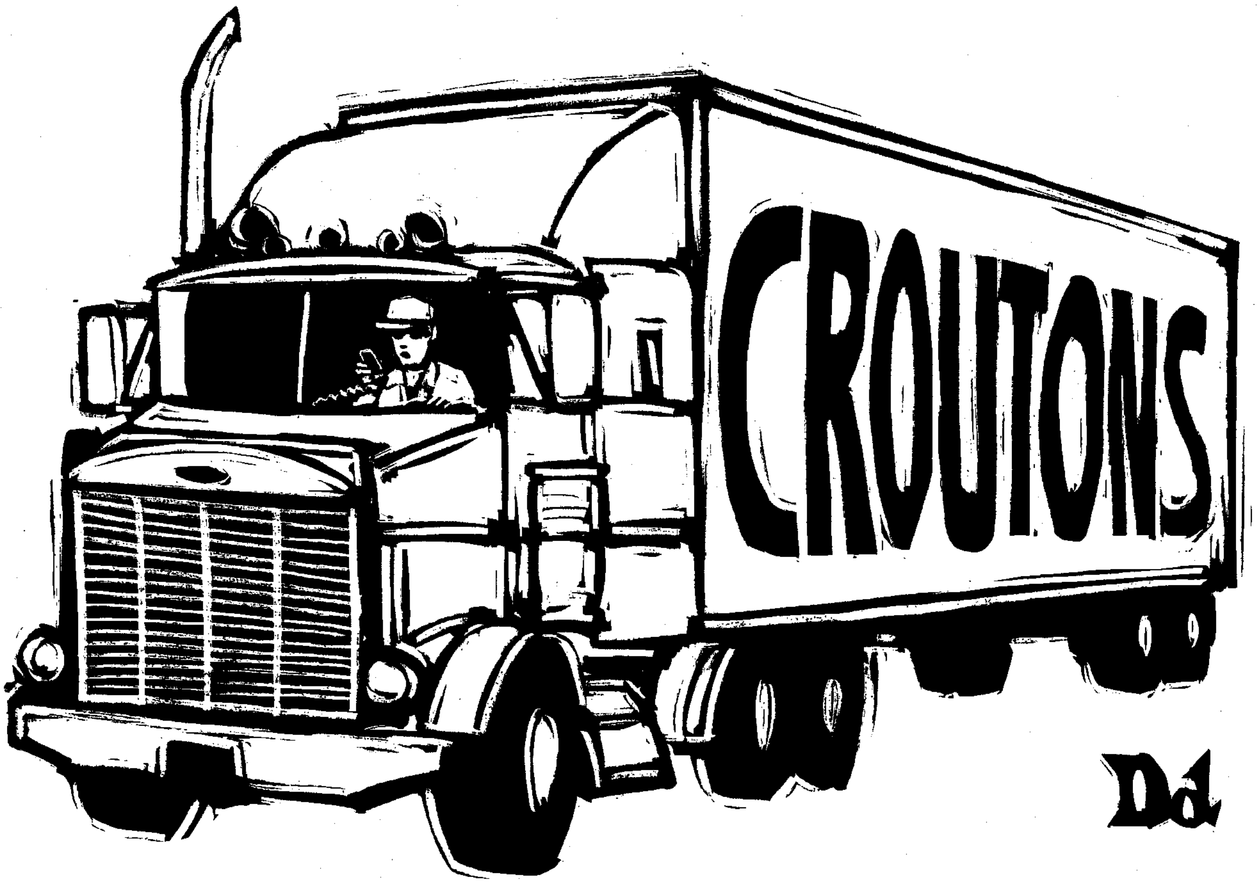
"Can you come over here for a second and give this a pained look?"



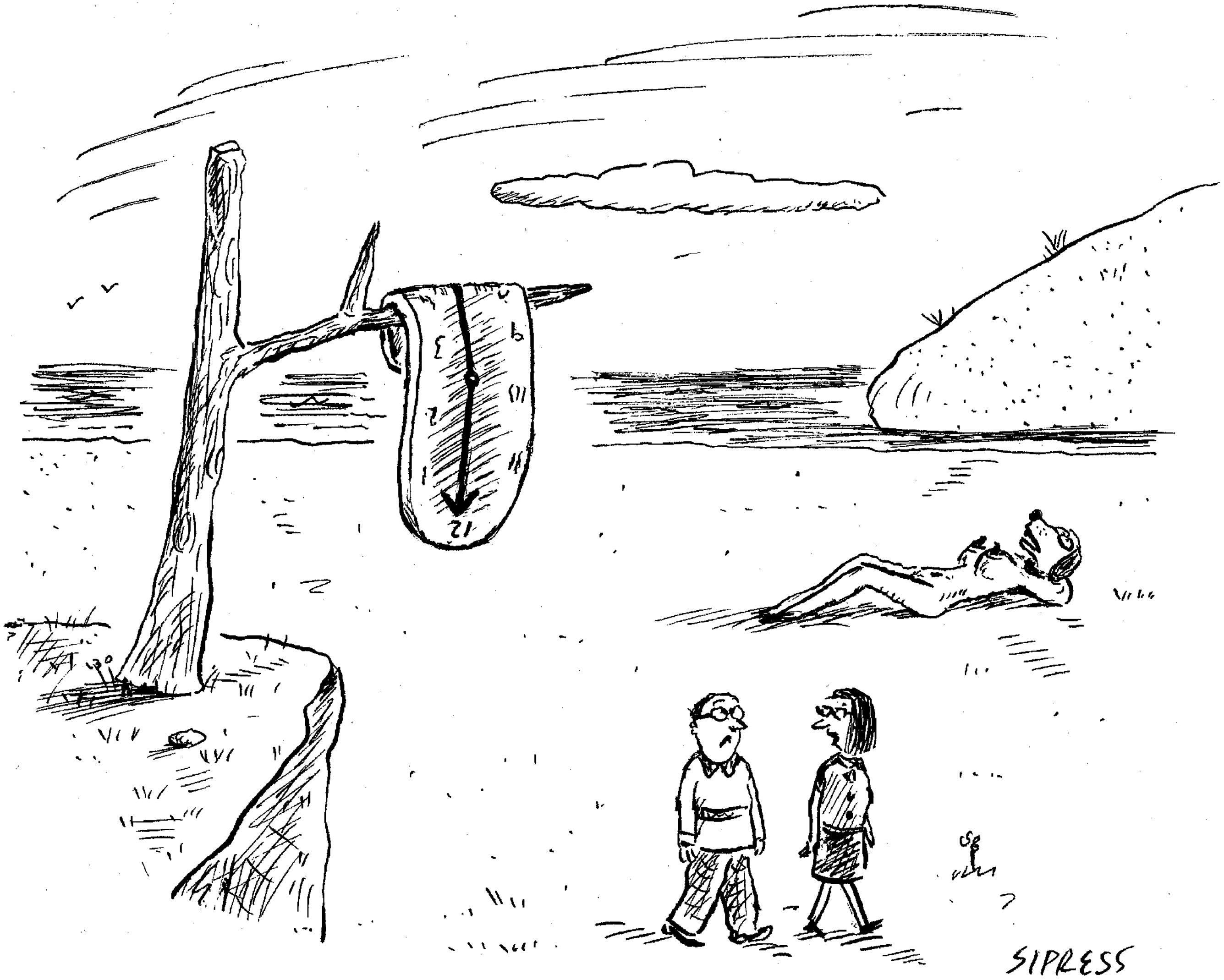
"I wish you'd stop bringing work home."



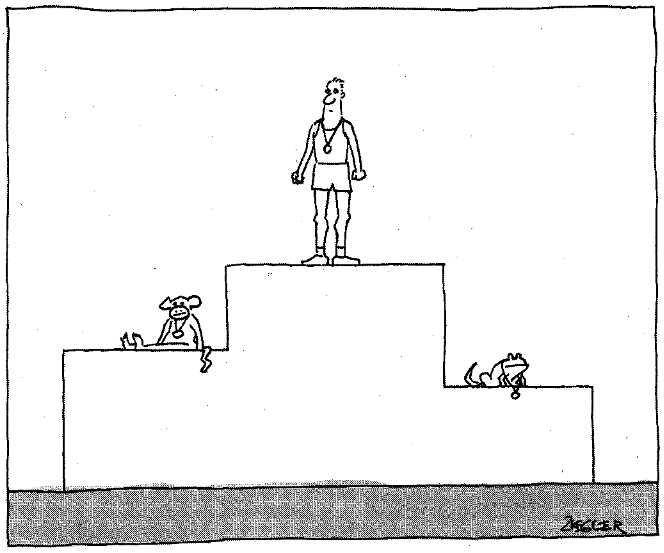
"Don't worry, Liz, this is a big city—
you'll meet another idiot."

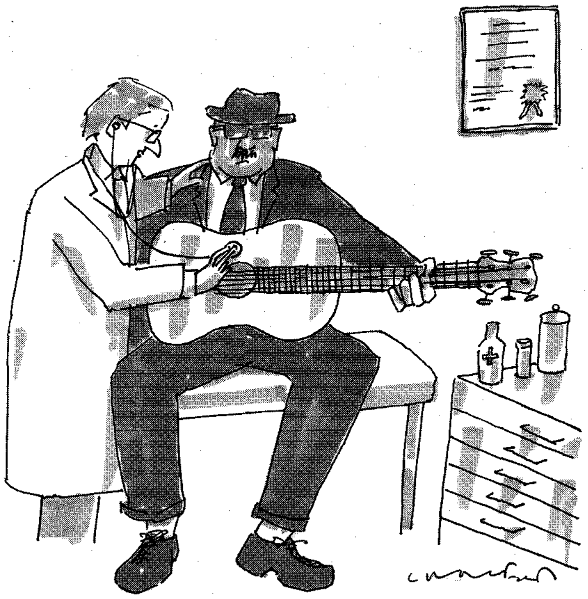

CROUTONS
DD

"I just have this feeling that if I drove off a cliff nobody would really miss me."



"Are we there yet?"

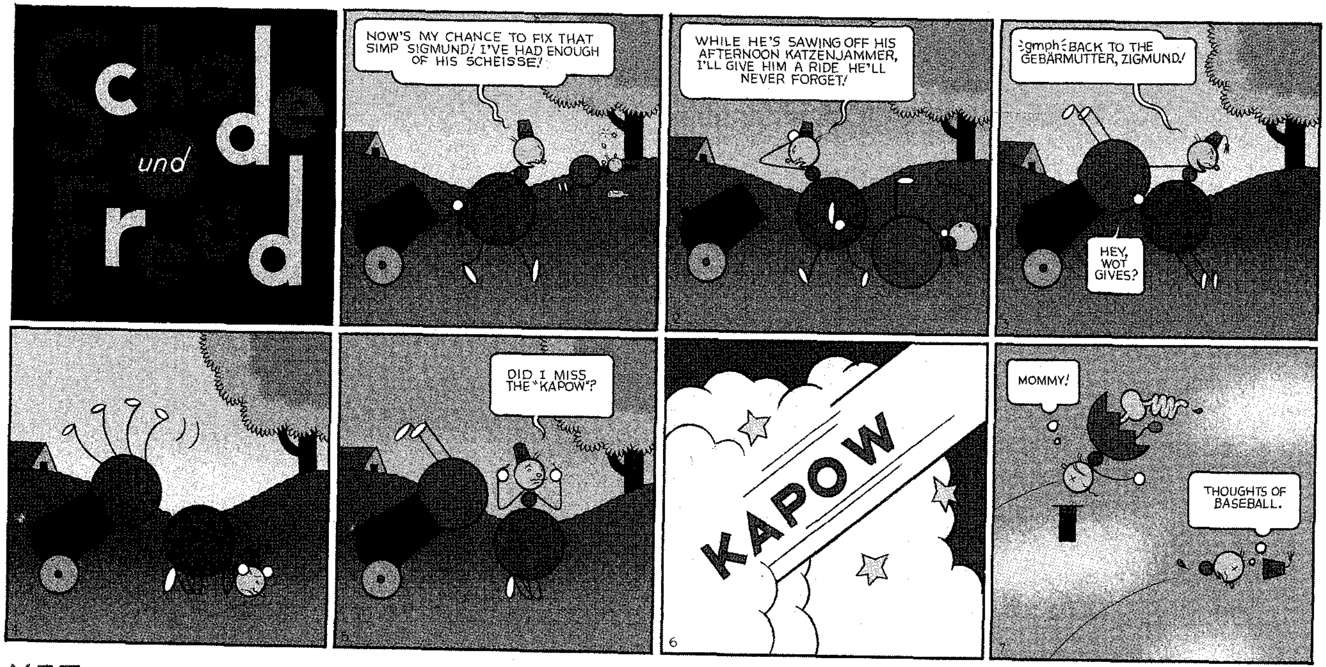




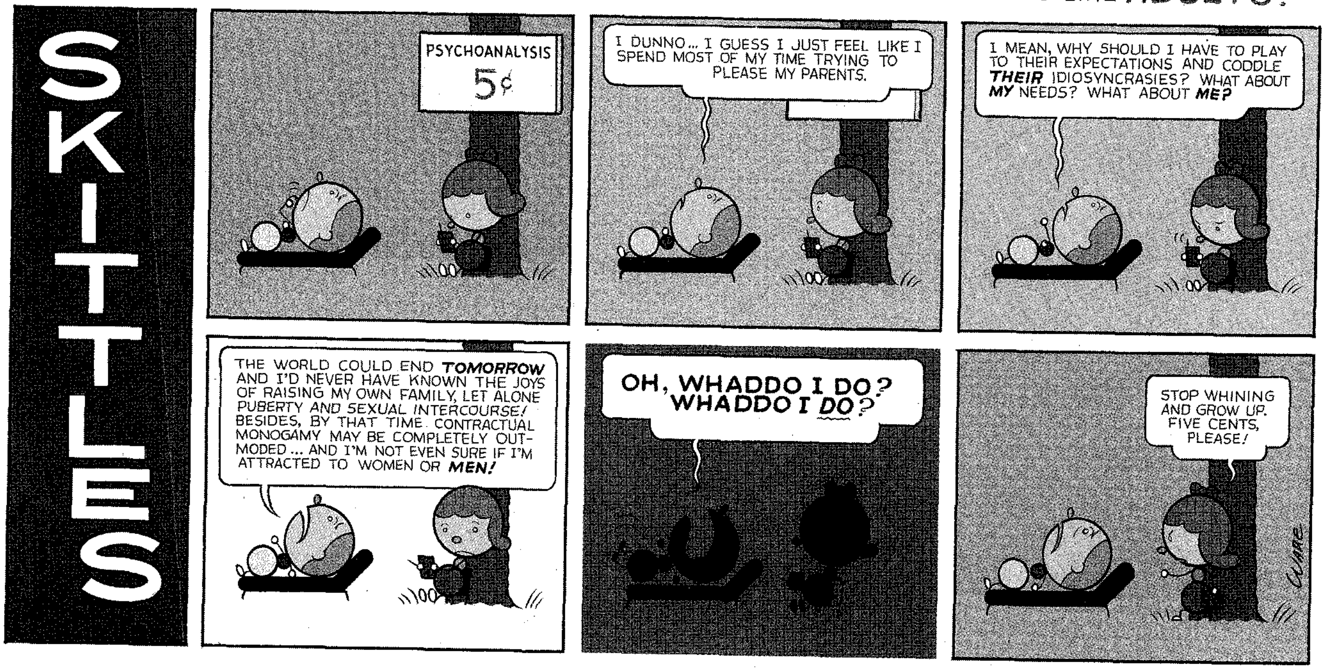
"You have a case of the blues, Mississippi Red, but fortunately they're treatable with women, Cadillacs, and big diamond rings."

UNSOLVED MYSTERIES
OF THE NORTH AMERICAN COMIC STRIP

No. 16: ***WHY***, IN THE EARLY DAYS OF "THE FUNNIES," WAS IT TYPICAL FOR ***ADULTS*** TO ACT LIKE ***CHILDREN?***


c und d
r d
NOW'S MY CHANCE TO FIX THAT SIMP SIGMUND! I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF HIS SCHEISSE!
WHILE HE'S SAWING OFF HIS AFTERNOON KATZENJAMMER, I'LL GIVE HIM A RIDE HE'LL NEVER FORGET!
∻gmph∻ BACK TO THE GEBÄRMUTTER, ZIGMUND!
HEY, WOT GIVES?
DID I MISS THE "KAPOW"?
KAPOW
6
MOMMY!
THOUGHTS OF BASEBALL.

YET, FIFTY OR SO YEARS LATER, WAS ONE MORE LIKELY TO SEE ***CHILDREN*** *ACTING LIKE* ***ADULTS?***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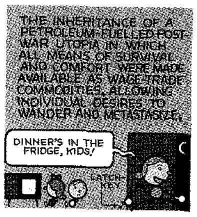
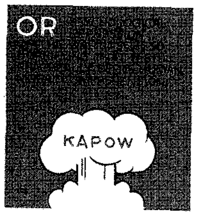
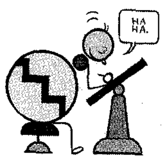
PSYCHOANALYSIS 5¢
I DUNNO... I GUESS I JUST FEEL LIKE I SPEND MOST OF MY TIME TRYING TO PLEASE MY PARENTS.
I MEAN, WHY SHOULD I HAVE TO PLAY TO THEIR EXPECTATIONS AND CODDLE *THEIR* IDIOSYNCRASIES? WHAT ABOUT *MY* NEEDS? WHAT ABOUT *ME?*
THE WORLD COULD END *TOMORROW* AND I'D NEVER HAVE KNOWN THE JOYS OF RAISING MY OWN FAMILY, LET ALONE PUBERTY AND SEXUAL INTERCOURSE! BESIDES, BY THAT TIME CONTRACTUAL MONOGAMY MAY BE COMPLETELY OUTMODED ... AND I'M NOT EVEN SURE IF I'M ATTRACTED TO WOMEN OR *MEN!*
OH, WHADDO I DO? WHADDO I *DO?*
STOP WHINING AND GROW UP. FIVE CENTS, PLEASE!
WARE

WAS IT


THE INHERITANCE OF A PETROLEUM-FUELLED POST-WAR UTOPIA IN WHICH ALL MEANS OF SURVIVAL AND COMFORT WERE MADE AVAILABLE AS WAGE-TRADE COMMODITIES, ALLOWING INDIVIDUAL DESIRES TO WANDER AND METASTASIZE,
DINNER'S IN THE FRIDGE, KIDS!
LATCH-KEY

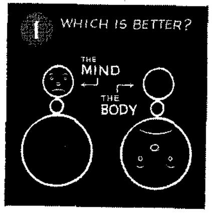


OR ONE GENIUS'S UNRESOLVED CHILDHOOD RAGE?



BONUS QUESTIONS

1. WHICH IS BETTER?


THE MIND
THE BODY

2. COMICS AREN'T JUST FOR ________ ANYMORE.

3. AS A NATION, AMERICA IS CURRENTLY IN THE
   - A. ORAL STAGE
   - B. ANAL STAGE
   - C. GRAB-ONTO-WHATEVER'S-CLOSEST-WHILE-THE-SHIP-GOES-DOWN STAGE

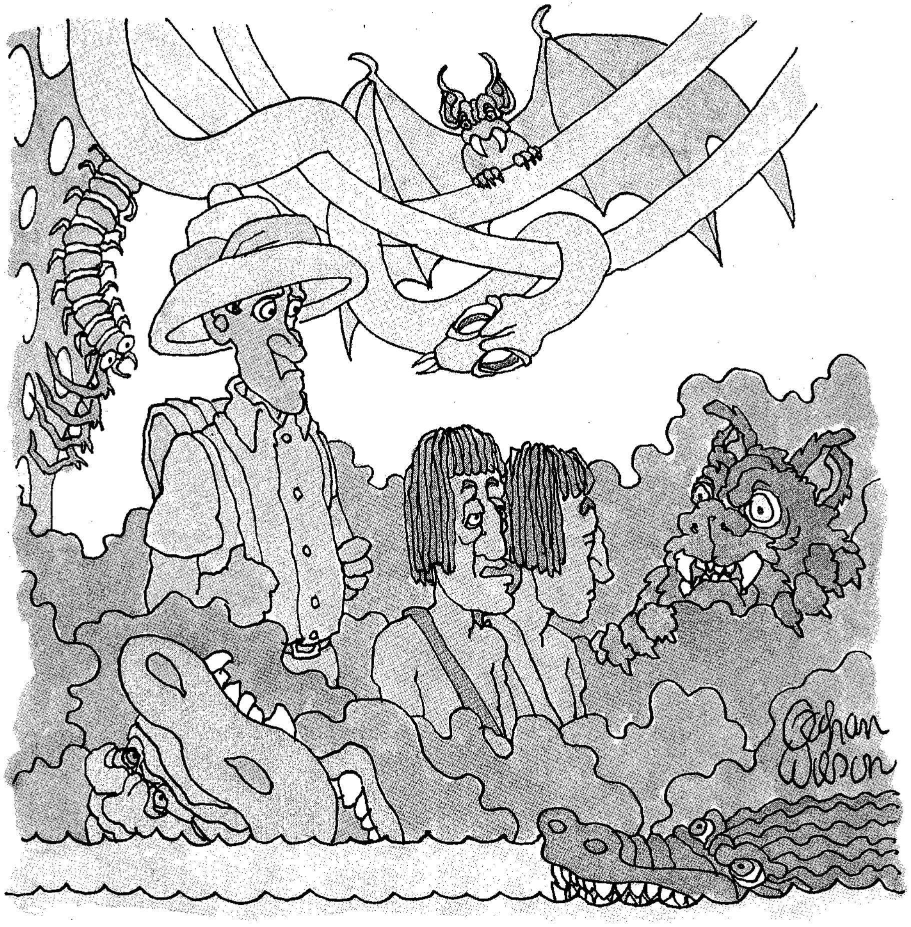
4. WHAT'S FUNNIER?
   - A. SEX
   - B. DEATH

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: BILL BLACKBEARD & MARTIN WILLIAMS. **APOLOGIES:** ADULTS, CHILDREN.

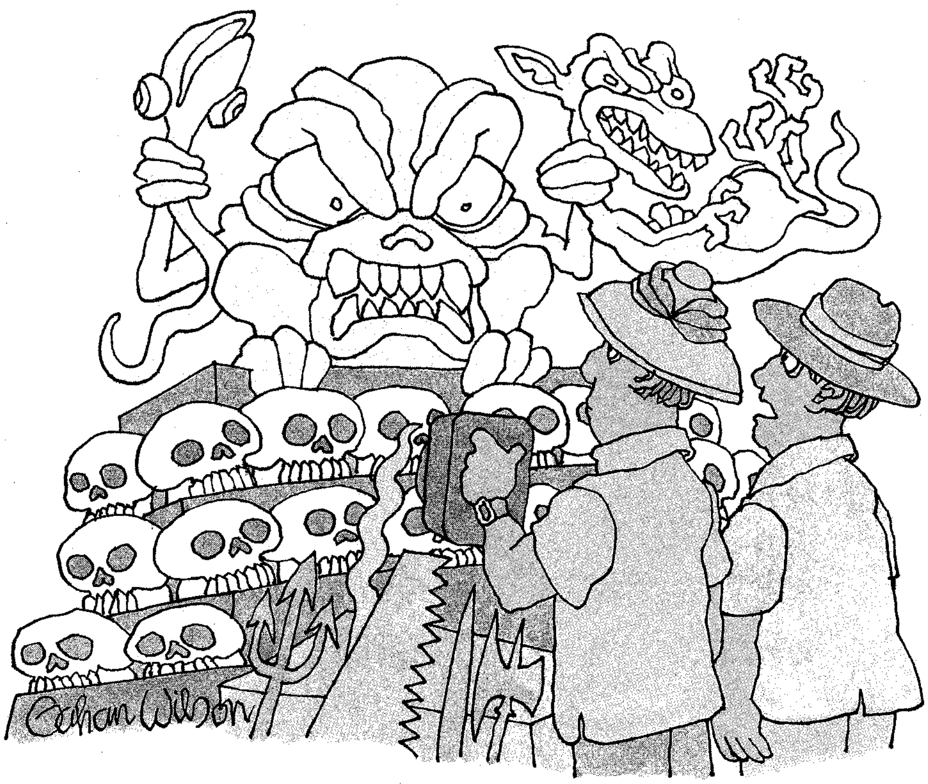
PORTFOLIO

MONSTER'S BALL

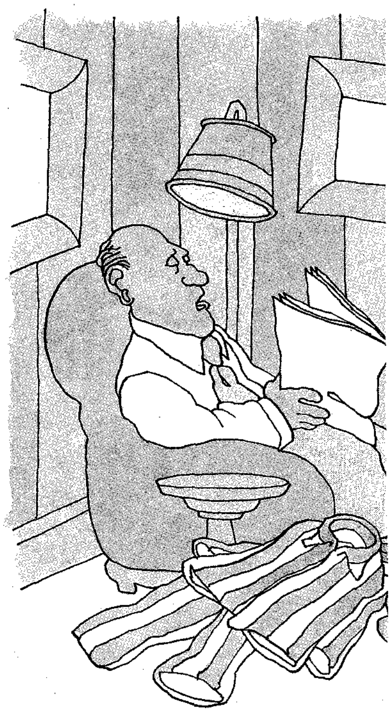
The first cartoon that Gahan Wilson ever sold, for seven dollars and fifty cents, shows a bird sprawled in rigor mortis. A boy walking by with his father says, "Look, Daddy—the first robin!" Like Charles Addams, to whom he is often compared, Wilson is a master of the macabre. But, in the nearly five hundred cartoons and covers that he has drawn for *The New Yorker* since 1976 (and in his work for *Playboy*, which made him famous), Wilson has created a gleefully grotesque world all his own: traffic lights and trash cans grow teeth; plants come menacingly to life. Horror and humor can feel like "the same thing," he has said. "And that's a big, big part of all my monsters."



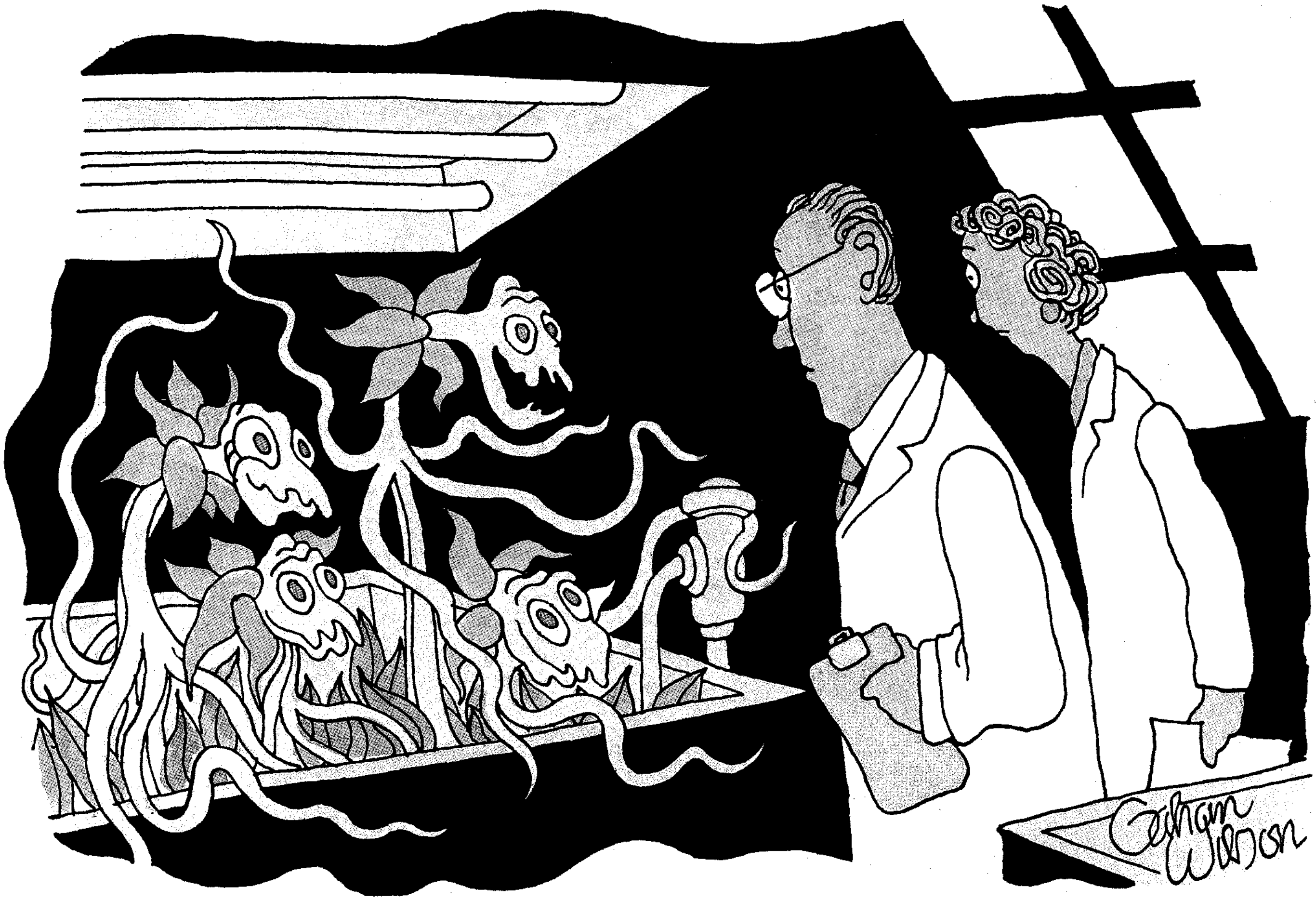
"But then I'm sure New York City has its own kind of challenges."



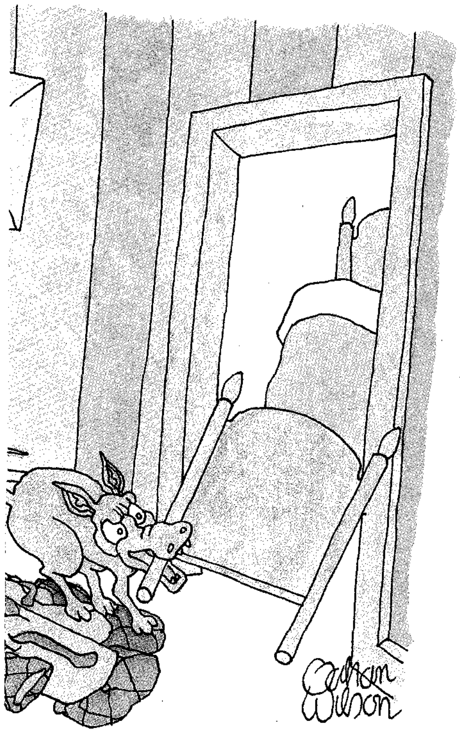
"I hate to admit it, but I'm glad this civilization died out."

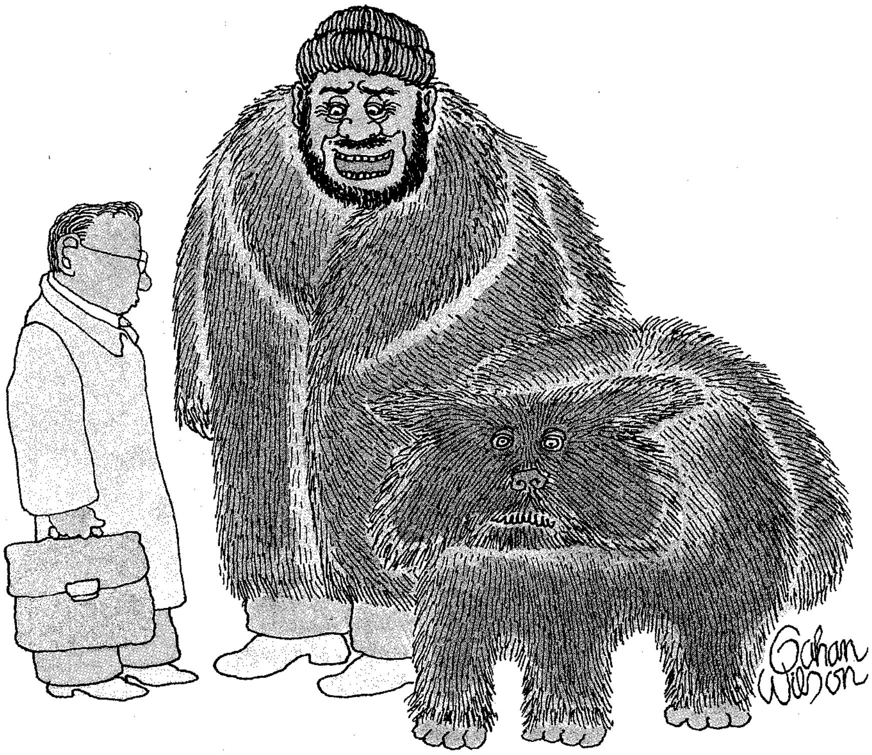


"Just the slippers is fine!"



"We were just wondering if you were edible."

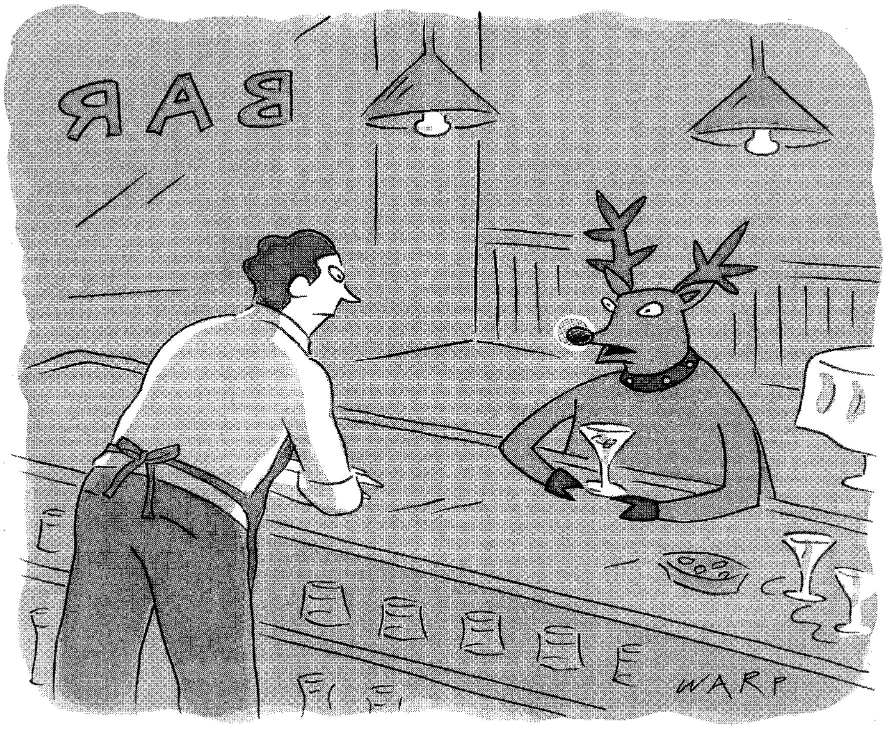




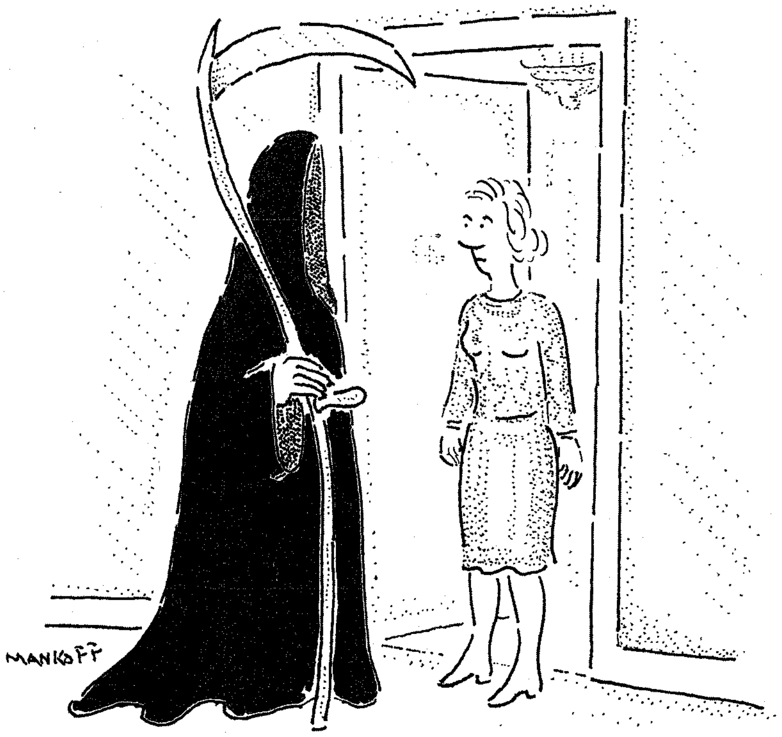
"And when they die they make the most marvellous overcoats!"

WHAT'S SO FUNNY ABOUT RED?

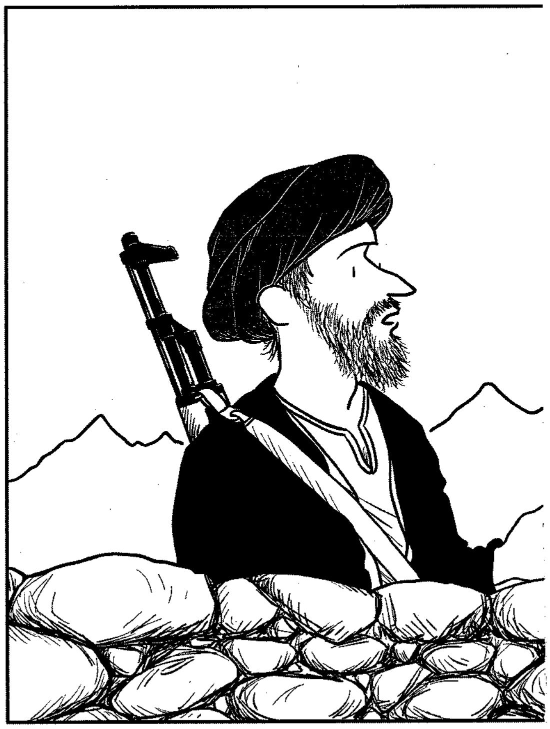
That's what Harold Ross famously said when asked why he didn't publish cartoons in color. But maybe red can be funny after all. Five cartoonists test the possibilities.



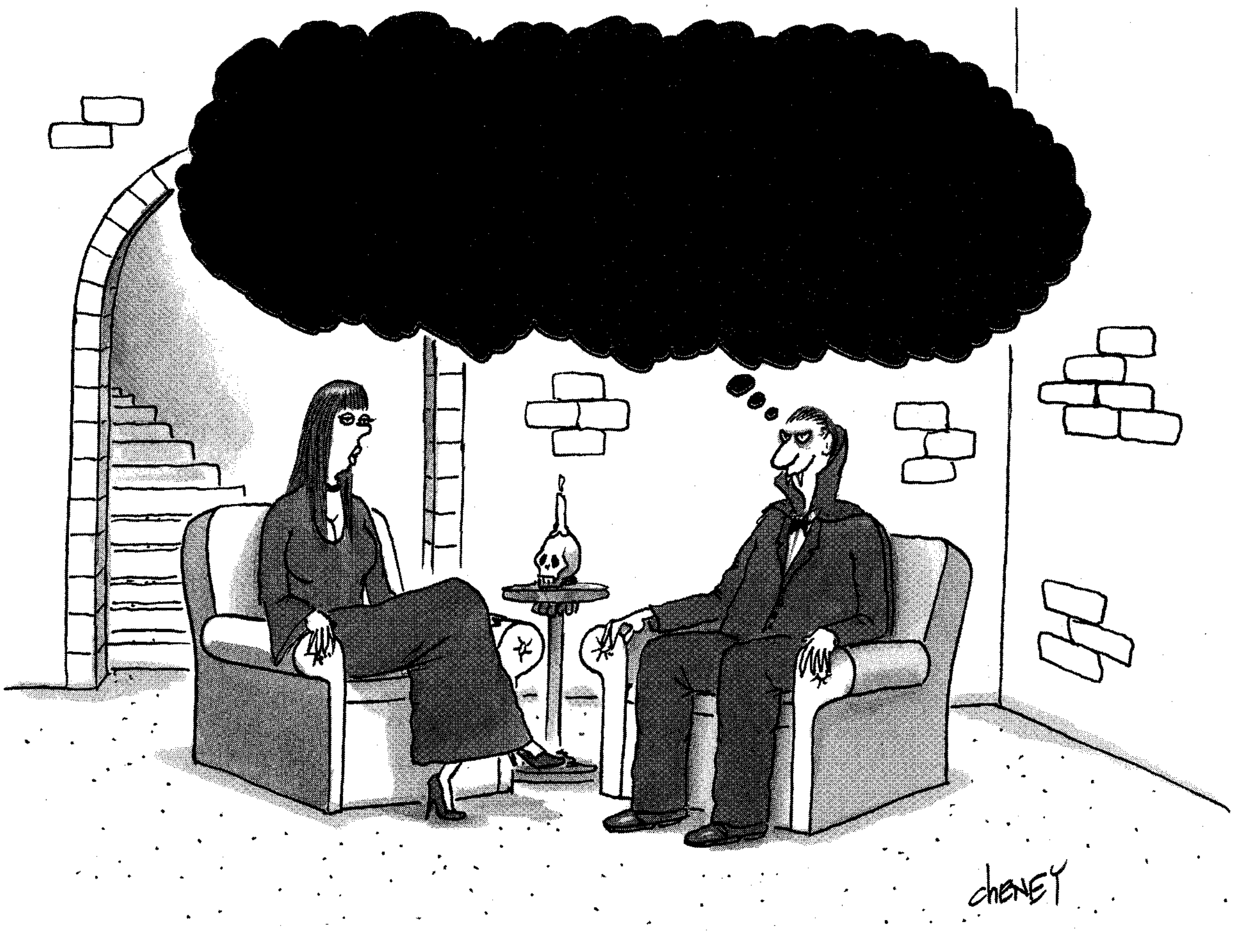
"I have to drink—it's critical that my nose remains red."



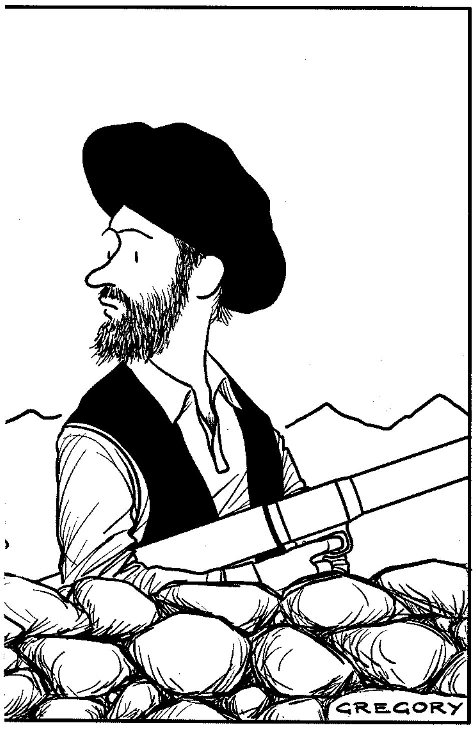
"Happy Valentine's Day!"

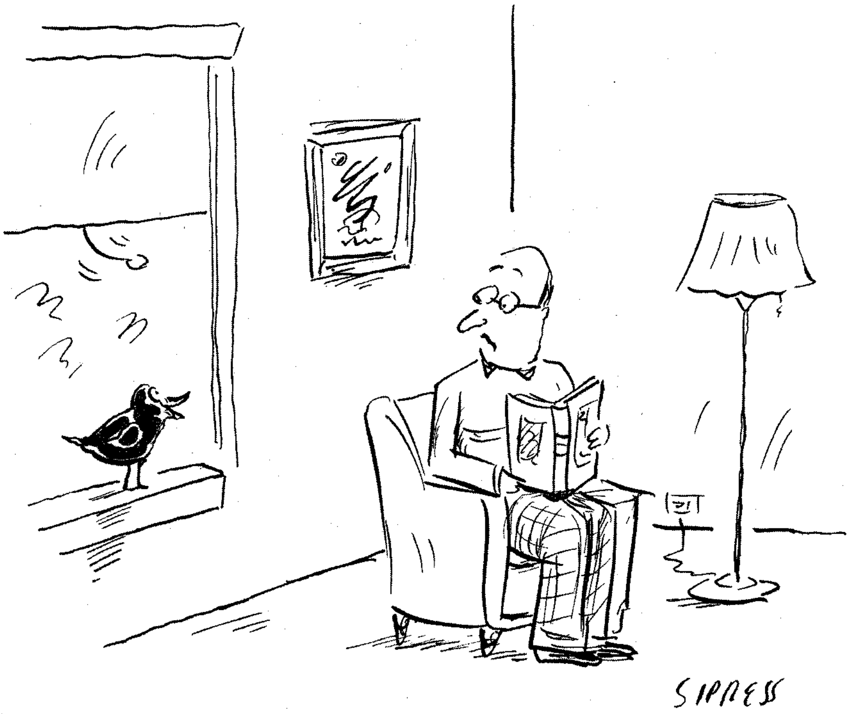


"I attended terrorist training camp in Pakistan, but for undergrad I went to the University of Alabama."



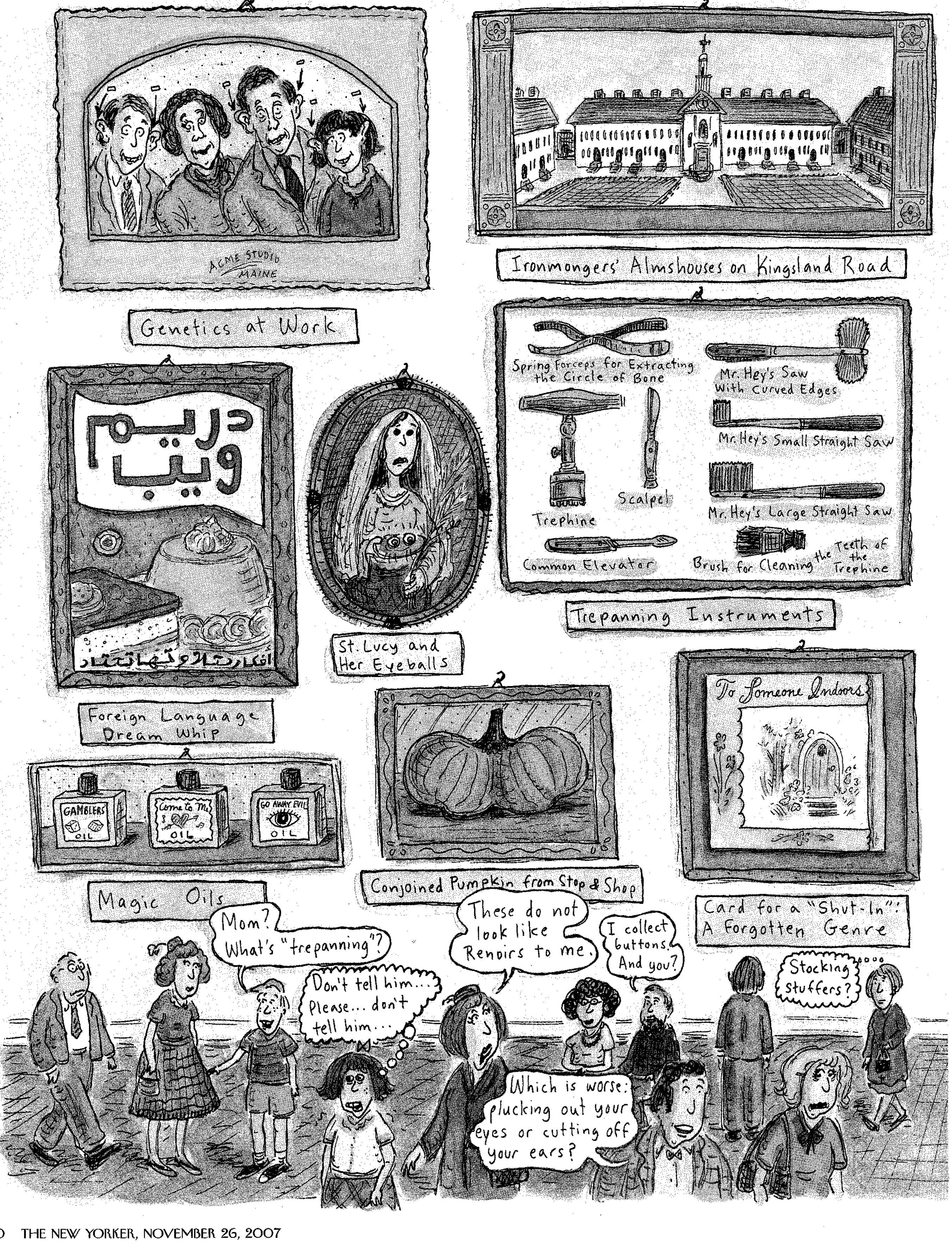
"A penny for your thoughts."



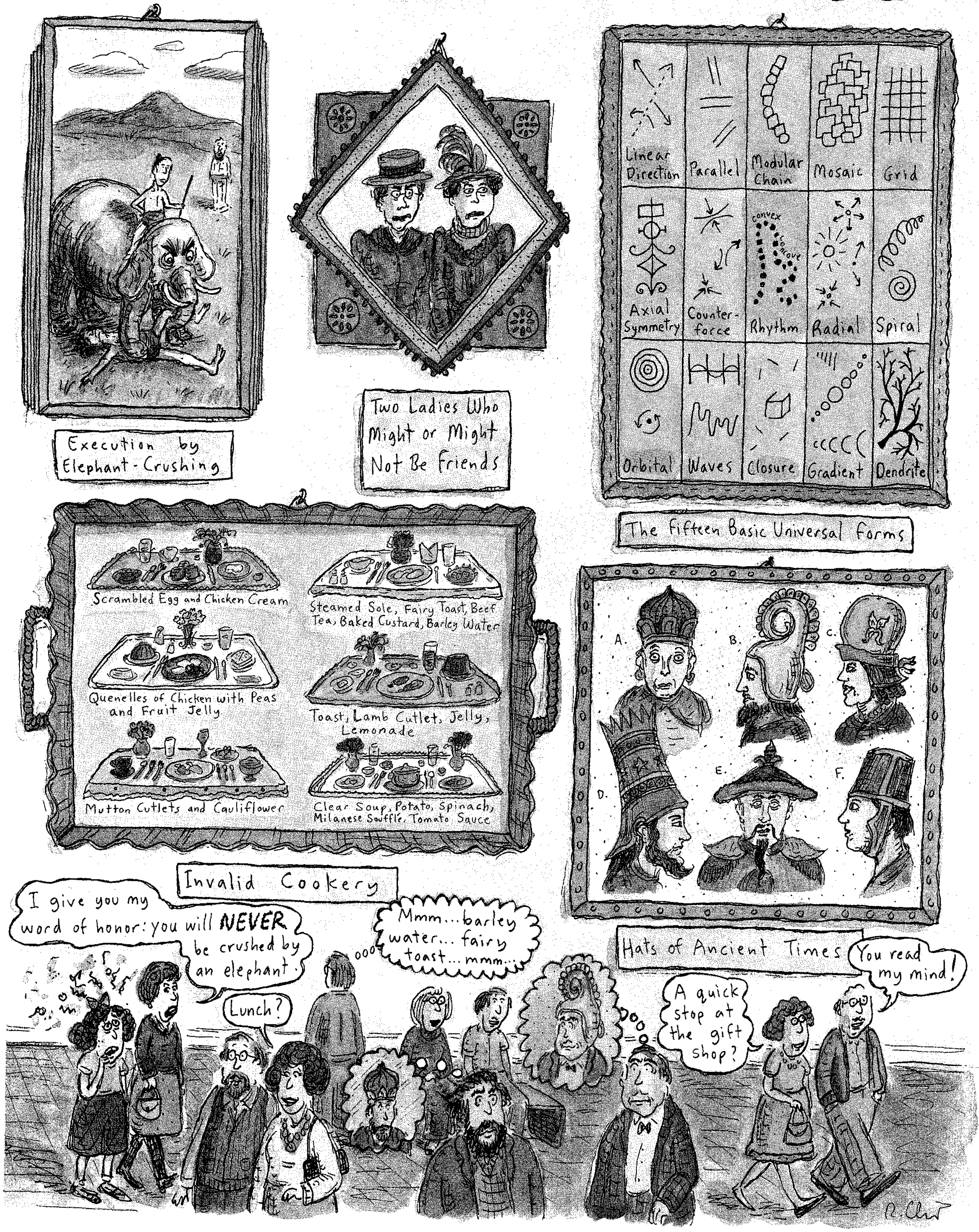


"Hi—I'm the bluebird of color-blindness."

THE AMAZING MUSEUM


ACME STUDIO MAINE
Genetics at Work
Ironmongers' Almshouses on Kingsland Road
Spring Forceps for Extracting the Circle of Bone
Mr. Hey's Saw With Curved Edges
Mr. Hey's Small Straight Saw
Trephine
Scalpel
Mr. Hey's Large Straight Saw
Common Elevator
Brush for Cleaning the Teeth of the Trephine
Trepanning Instruments
دريم ويب
Foreign Language Dream Whip
St. Lucy and Her Eyeballs
To Someone Indoors
Card for a "Shut-In": A Forgotten Genre
GAMBLERS OIL
Come to Me OIL
GO AWAY EVIL OIL
Magic Oils
Conjoined Pumpkin from Stop & Shop
Mom? What's "trepanning"?
Don't tell him... Please... don't tell him...
These do not look like Renoirs to me.
I collect buttons. And you?
Stocking stuffers?
Which is worse: plucking out your eyes or cutting off your ears?

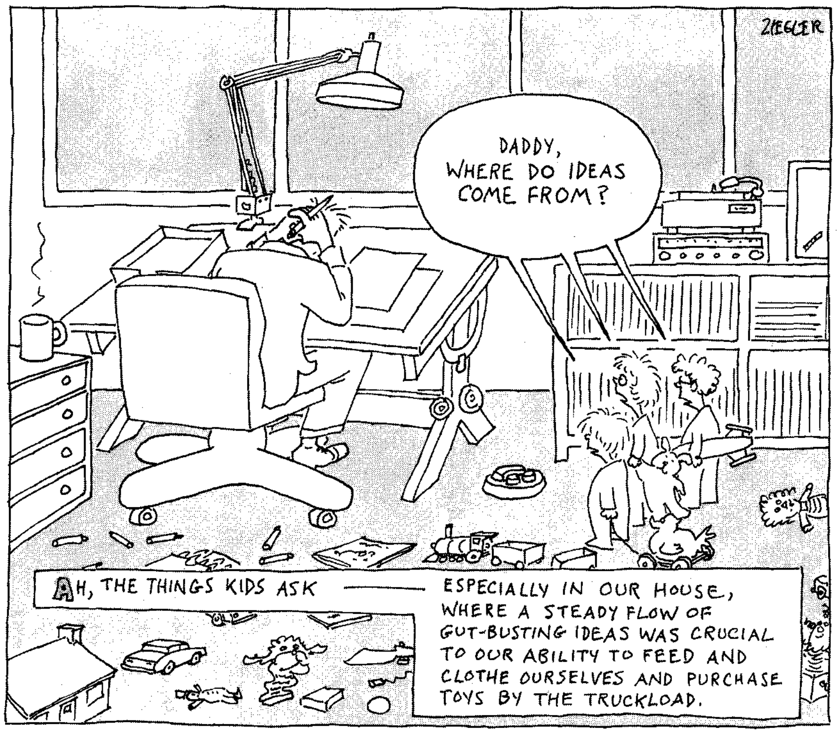
OF PAGES 150-151

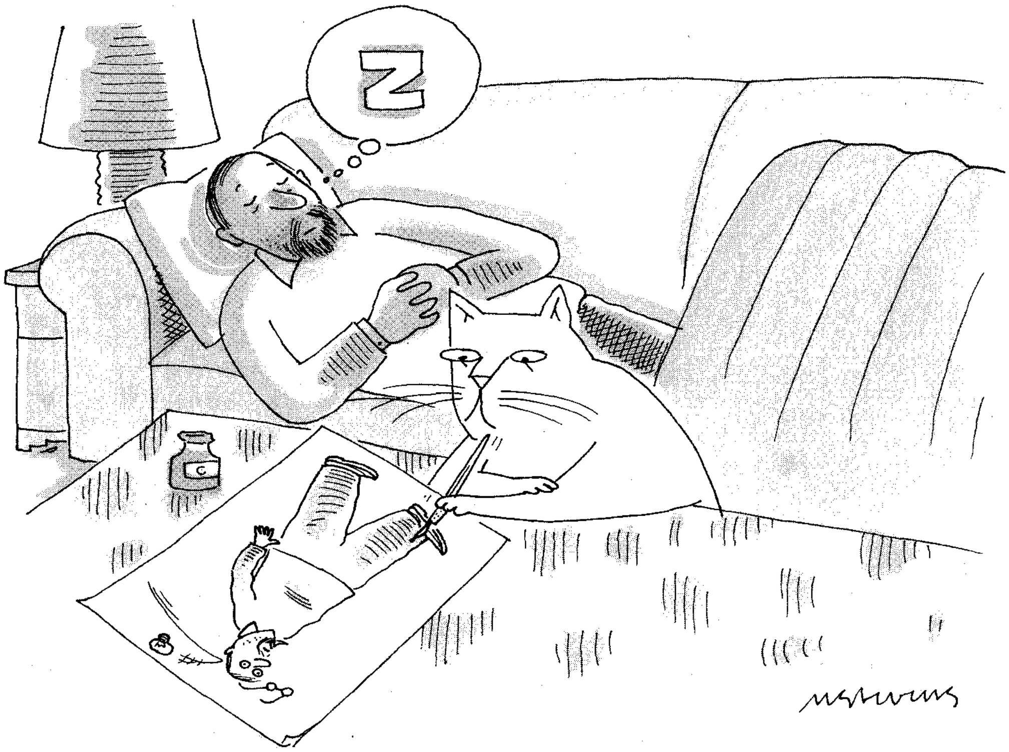

Execution by Elephant-Crushing
Two Ladies Who Might or Might Not Be Friends
Linear Direction
Parallel
Modular Chain
Mosaic
Grid
Axial Symmetry
Counter-force
convex
concave
Rhythm
Radial
Spiral
Orbital
Waves
Closure
Gradient
Dendrite
The Fifteen Basic Universal Forms
Scrambled Egg and Chicken Cream
Steamed Sole, Fairy Toast, Beef Tea, Baked Custard, Barley Water
Quenelles of Chicken with Peas and Fruit Jelly
Toast, Lamb Cutlet, Jelly, Lemonade
Mutton Cutlets and Cauliflower
Clear Soup, Potato, Spinach, Milanese Soufflé, Tomato Sauce
Invalid Cookery
A.
B.
C.
D.
E.
F.
Hats of Ancient Times
I give you my word of honor: you will NEVER be crushed by an elephant.
Lunch?
Mmm... barley water... fairy toast... mmm...
A quick stop at the gift shop?
You read my mind!

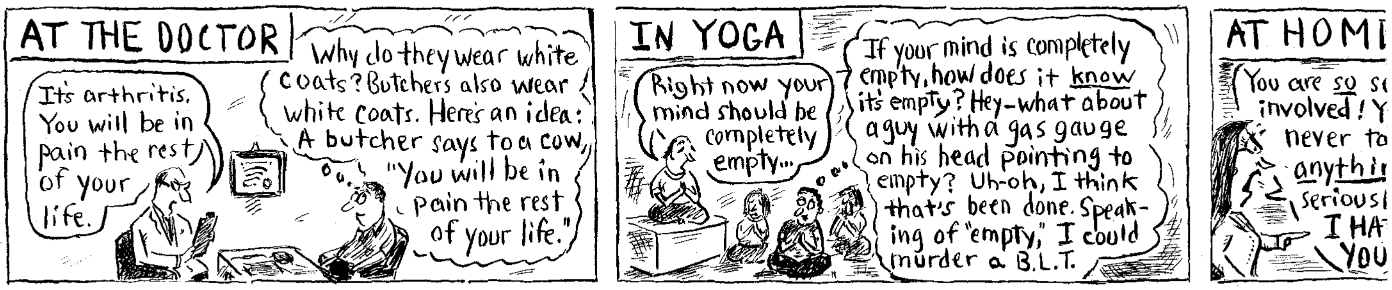
ALBUM

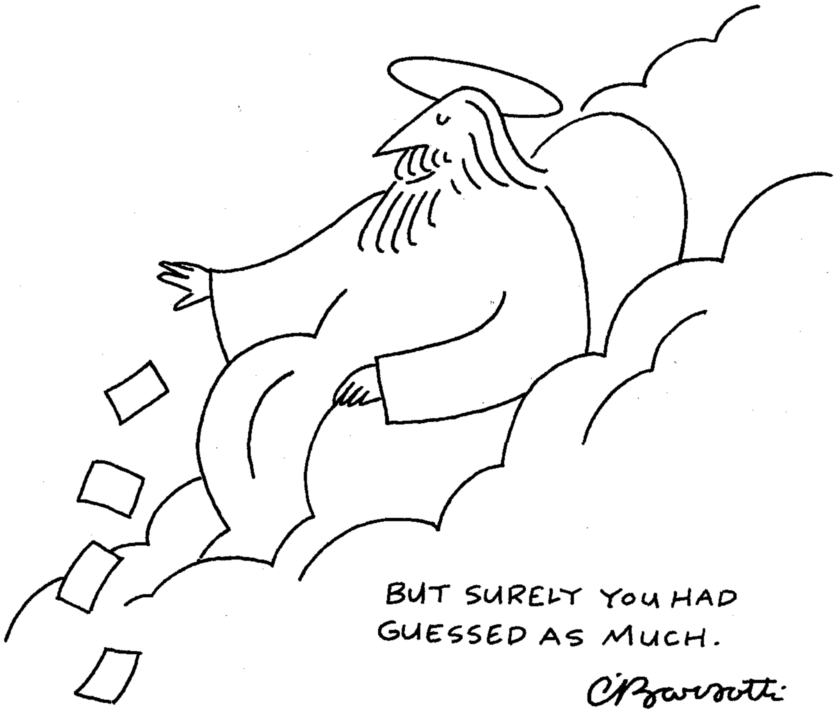
WHERE I GET MY IDEAS

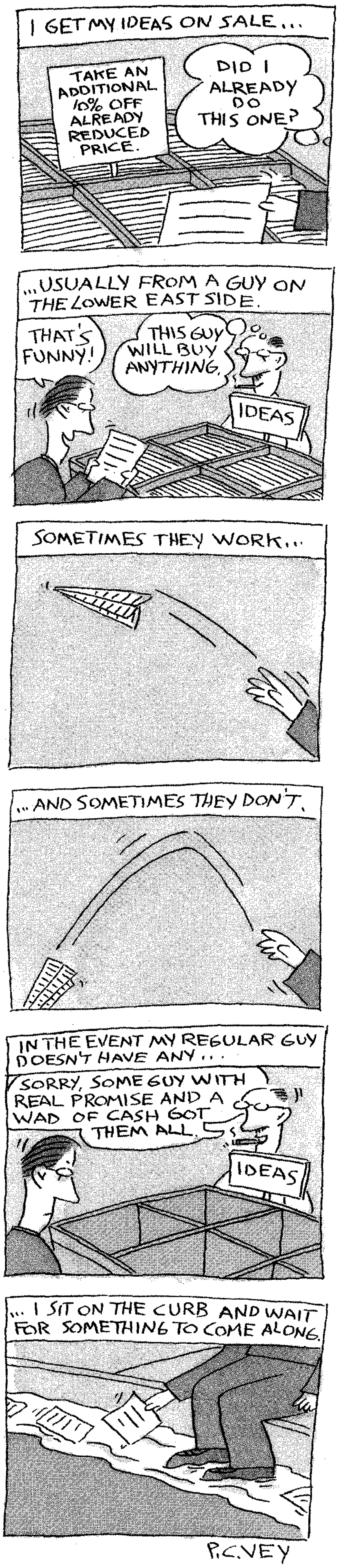
Cartoonists are constantly being asked where their ideas come from. (A close second in the Q.&A. department: What kind of pen do you use?) Here, in cartoon form, six professionals shed some light on the creative process.

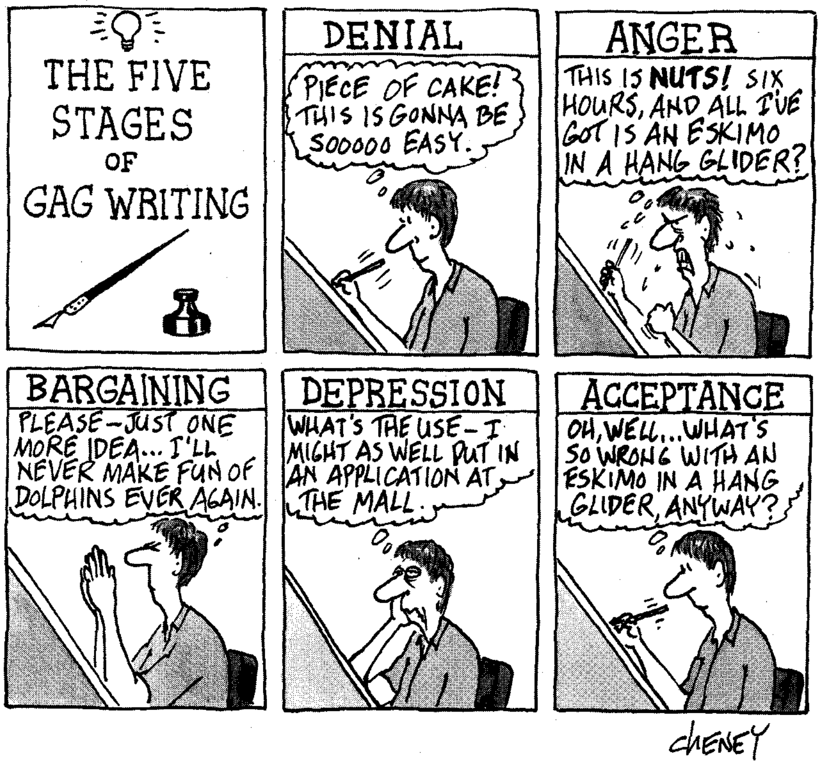

DADDY, WHERE DO IDEAS COME FROM?
AH, THE THINGS KIDS ASK —— ESPECIALLY IN OUR HOUSE, WHERE A STEADY FLOW OF GUT-BUSTING IDEAS WAS CRUCIAL TO OUR ABILITY TO FEED AND CLOTHE OURSELVES AND PURCHASE TOYS BY THE TRUCKLOAD.

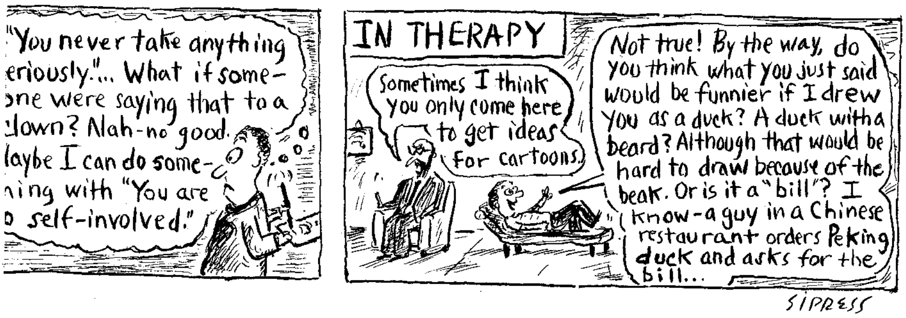


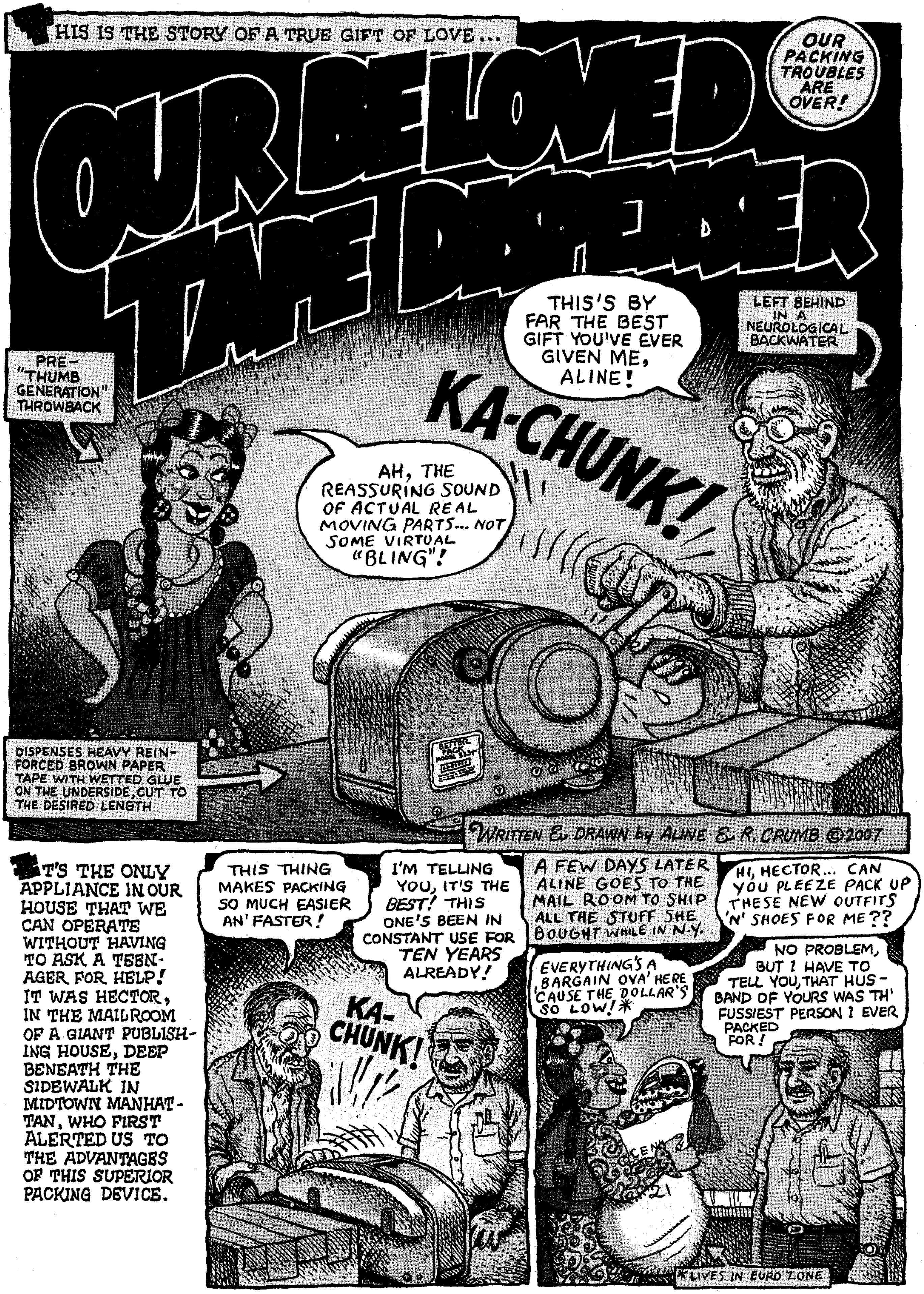

AT THE DOCTOR
It's arthritis. You will be in pain the rest of your life.
Why do they wear white coats? Butchers also wear white coats. Here's an idea: A butcher says to a cow, "You will be in pain the rest of your life."
IN YOGA
Right now your mind should be completely empty...
If your mind is completely empty, how does it know it's empty? Hey—what about a guy with a gas gauge on his head pointing to empty? Uh-oh, I think that's been done. Speaking of "empty," I could murder a B.L.T.
AT HOM
You are so s
involved! Y
never ta
anythi
serious
I HA
YOU

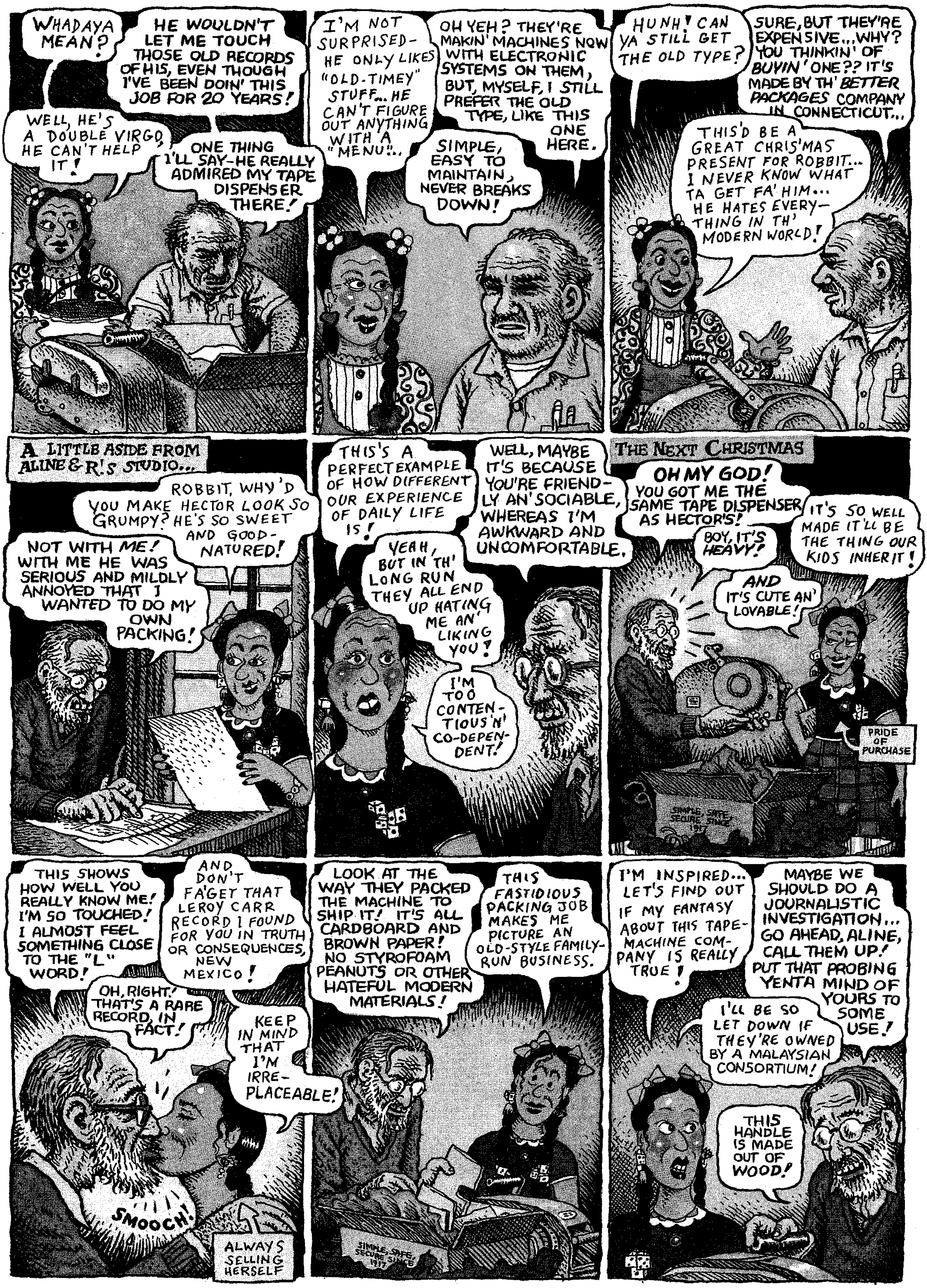

BUT SURELY YOU HAD GUESSED AS MUCH.
CBarsotti

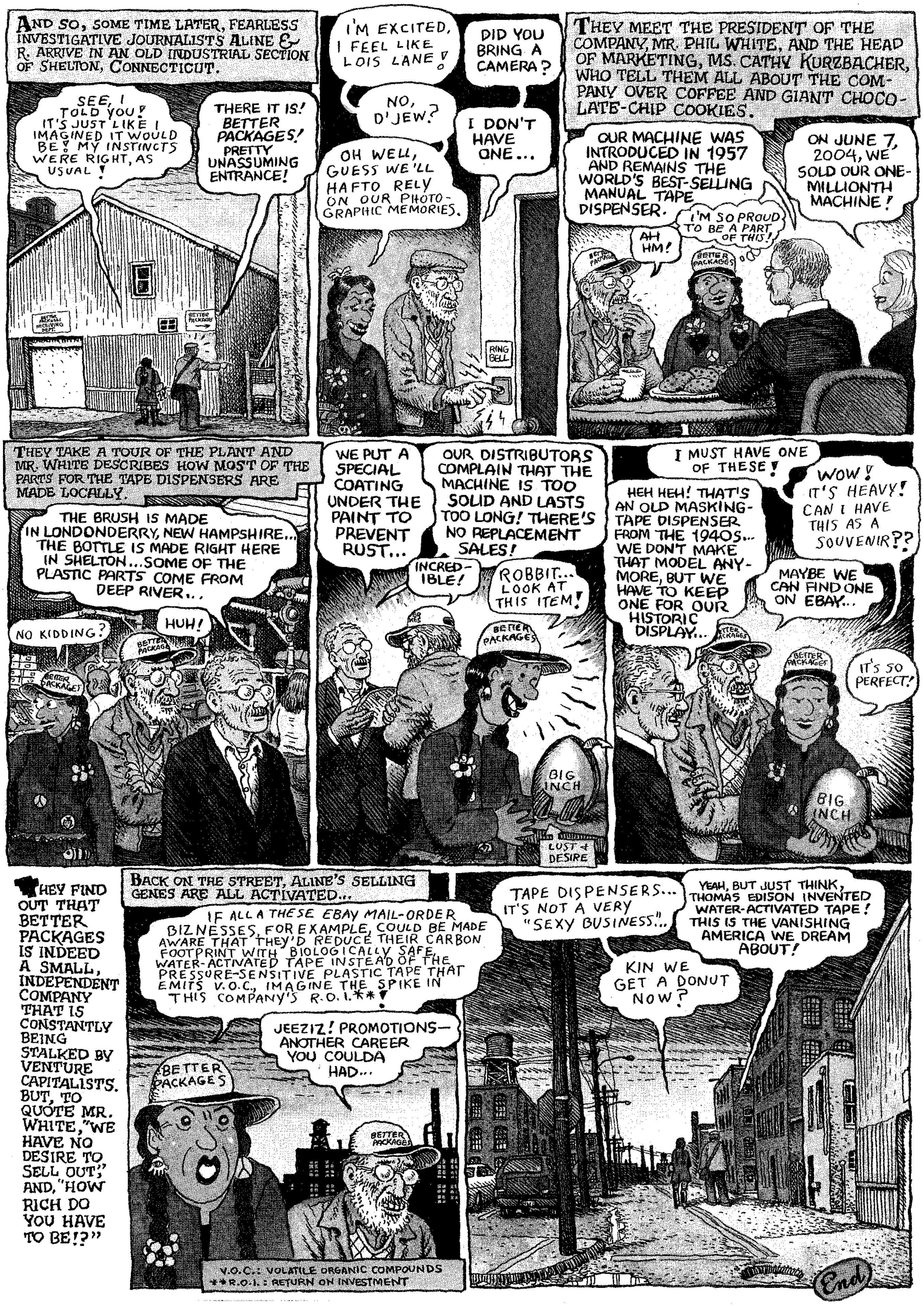

I GET MY IDEAS ON SALE...
TAKE AN ADDITIONAL 10% OFF ALREADY REDUCED PRICE.
DID I ALREADY DO THIS ONE?
...USUALLY FROM A GUY ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE.
THAT'S FUNNY!
THIS GUY WILL BUY ANYTHING.
IDEAS
SOMETIMES THEY WORK...
...AND SOMETIMES THEY DON'T.
IN THE EVENT MY REGULAR GUY DOESN'T HAVE ANY...
SORRY, SOME GUY WITH REAL PROMISE AND A WAD OF CASH GOT THEM ALL.
IDEAS
... I SIT ON THE CURB AND WAIT FOR SOMETHING TO COME ALONG.
P.C.VEY


THE FIVE STAGES OF GAG WRITING
DENIAL
PIECE OF CAKE! THIS IS GONNA BE SOOOOOO EASY.
ANGER
THIS IS NUTS! SIX HOURS, AND ALL I'VE GOT IS AN ESKIMO IN A HANG GLIDER?
BARGAINING
PLEASE—JUST ONE MORE IDEA... I'LL NEVER MAKE FUN OF DOLPHINS EVER AGAIN.
DEPRESSION
WHAT'S THE USE—I MIGHT AS WELL PUT IN AN APPLICATION AT THE MALL.
ACCEPTANCE
OH, WELL... WHAT'S SO WRONG WITH AN ESKIMO IN A HANG GLIDER, ANYWAY?
CHENEY


"You never take anything eriously."... What if some- one were saying that to a lown? Nah-no good. laybe I can do some- ning with "You are o self-involved."
IN THERAPY
Sometimes I think you only come here to get ideas for cartoons.
Not true! By the way, do you think what you just said would be funnier if I drew you as a duck? A duck with a beard? Although that would be hard to draw because of the beak. Or is it a "bill"? I know—a guy in a Chinese restaurant orders Peking duck and asks for the bill...
SIPRESS


THIS IS THE STORY OF A TRUE GIFT OF LOVE...
OUR BELOVED TAPE DISPENSER
OUR PACKING TROUBLES ARE OVER!
THIS'S BY FAR THE BEST GIFT YOU'VE EVER GIVEN ME, ALINE!
LEFT BEHIND IN A NEUROLOGICAL BACKWATER
PRE-"THUMB GENERATION" THROWBACK
KA-CHUNK!
AH, THE REASSURING SOUND OF ACTUAL REAL MOVING PARTS... NOT SOME VIRTUAL "BLING"!
DISPENSES HEAVY REINFORCED BROWN PAPER TAPE WITH WETTED GLUE ON THE UNDERSIDE, CUT TO THE DESIRED LENGTH
WRITTEN & DRAWN by ALINE & R. CRUMB ©2007
IT'S THE ONLY APPLIANCE IN OUR HOUSE THAT WE CAN OPERATE WITHOUT HAVING TO ASK A TEENAGER FOR HELP! IT WAS HECTOR, IN THE MAILROOM OF A GIANT PUBLISHING HOUSE, DEEP BENEATH THE SIDEWALK IN MIDTOWN MANHATTAN, WHO FIRST ALERTED US TO THE ADVANTAGES OF THIS SUPERIOR PACKING DEVICE.
THIS THING MAKES PACKING SO MUCH EASIER AN' FASTER!
I'M TELLING YOU, IT'S THE BEST! THIS ONE'S BEEN IN CONSTANT USE FOR TEN YEARS ALREADY!
KA-CHUNK!
A FEW DAYS LATER ALINE GOES TO THE MAIL ROOM TO SHIP ALL THE STUFF SHE BOUGHT WHILE IN N.Y.
HI, HECTOR... CAN YOU PLEEZE PACK UP THESE NEW OUTFITS 'N' SHOES FOR ME??
EVERYTHING'S A BARGAIN OVA' HERE 'CAUSE THE DOLLAR'S SO LOW!*
NO PROBLEM, BUT I HAVE TO TELL YOU, THAT HUSBAND OF YOURS WAS TH' FUSSIEST PERSON I EVER PACKED FOR!
CENT
21
*LIVES IN EURO ZONE


WHADAYA MEAN?
HE WOULDN'T LET ME TOUCH THOSE OLD RECORDS OF HIS, EVEN THOUGH I'VE BEEN DOIN' THIS JOB FOR 20 YEARS!
WELL, HE'S A DOUBLE VIRGO, HE CAN'T HELP IT!
ONE THING I'LL SAY-HE REALLY ADMIRED MY TAPE DISPENSER THERE!
I'M NOT SURPRISED- HE ONLY LIKES "OLD-TIMEY" STUFF... HE CAN'T FIGURE OUT ANYTHING WITH A "MENU"!..
OH YEH? THEY'RE MAKIN' MACHINES NOW WITH ELECTRONIC SYSTEMS ON THEM, BUT, MYSELF, I STILL PREFER THE OLD TYPE, LIKE THIS ONE HERE.
SIMPLE, EASY TO MAINTAIN, NEVER BREAKS DOWN!
HUNH! CAN YA STILL GET THE OLD TYPE?
SURE, BUT THEY'RE EXPENSIVE...WHY? YOU THINKIN' OF BUYIN' ONE?? IT'S MADE BY TH' BETTER PACKAGES COMPANY IN CONNECTICUT...
THIS'D BE A GREAT CHRIS'MAS PRESENT FOR ROBBIT... I NEVER KNOW WHAT TA GET FA' HIM... HE HATES EVERYTHING IN TH' MODERN WORLD!
A LITTLE ASIDE FROM ALINE & R.'S STUDIO...
ROBBIT, WHY'D YOU MAKE HECTOR LOOK SO GRUMPY? HE'S SO SWEET AND GOOD-NATURED!
NOT WITH ME! WITH ME HE WAS SERIOUS AND MILDLY ANNOYED THAT I WANTED TO DO MY OWN PACKING!
THIS'S A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF HOW DIFFERENT OUR EXPERIENCE OF DAILY LIFE IS!
WELL, MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE FRIENDLY AN' SOCIABLE, WHEREAS I'M AWKWARD AND UNCOMFORTABLE.
YEAH, BUT IN TH' LONG RUN THEY ALL END UP HATING ME AN' LIKING YOU!
I'M TOO CONTENTIOUS 'N' CO-DEPENDENT!
THE NEXT CHRISTMAS
OH MY GOD! YOU GOT ME THE SAME TAPE DISPENSER AS HECTOR'S!
BOY, IT'S HEAVY!
IT'S SO WELL MADE IT'LL BE THE THING OUR KIDS INHERIT!
AND IT'S CUTE AN' LOVABLE!
PRIDE OF PURCHASE
SIMPLE, SAFE, SECURE SINCE 1917
THIS SHOWS HOW WELL YOU REALLY KNOW ME! I'M SO TOUCHED! I ALMOST FEEL SOMETHING CLOSE TO THE "L" WORD!
AND DON'T FA'GET THAT LEROY CARR RECORD I FOUND FOR YOU IN TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES, NEW MEXICO!
OH, RIGHT! THAT'S A RARE RECORD, IN FACT!
KEEP IN MIND THAT I'M IRREPLACEABLE!
SMOOCH!
ALWAYS SELLING HERSELF
LOOK AT THE WAY THEY PACKED THE MACHINE TO SHIP IT! IT'S ALL CARDBOARD AND BROWN PAPER! NO STYROFOAM PEANUTS OR OTHER HATEFUL MODERN MATERIALS!
THIS FASTIDIOUS PACKING JOB MAKES ME PICTURE AN OLD-STYLE FAMILY-RUN BUSINESS.
SIMPLE, SAFE, SECURE SINCE 1917
I'M INSPIRED... LET'S FIND OUT IF MY FANTASY ABOUT THIS TAPE-MACHINE COMPANY IS REALLY TRUE!
MAYBE WE SHOULD DO A JOURNALISTIC INVESTIGATION... GO AHEAD, ALINE, CALL THEM UP! PUT THAT PROBING YENTA MIND OF YOURS TO SOME USE!
I'LL BE SO LET DOWN IF THEY'RE OWNED BY A MALAYSIAN CONSORTIUM!
THIS HANDLE IS MADE OUT OF WOOD!


AND SO, SOME TIME LATER, FEARLESS INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS ALINE & R. ARRIVE IN AN OLD INDUSTRIAL SECTION OF SHELTON, CONNECTICUT.
SEE, I TOLD YOU! IT'S JUST LIKE I IMAGINED IT WOULD BE! MY INSTINCTS WERE RIGHT, AS USUAL!
THERE IT IS! BETTER PACKAGES! PRETTY UNASSUMING ENTRANCE!
BETTER PACKAGES RECEIVING DEPT.
BETTER PACKAGES →
I'M EXCITED, I FEEL LIKE LOIS LANE!
DID YOU BRING A CAMERA?
NO, D'JEW?
I DON'T HAVE ONE...
OH WELL, GUESS WE'LL HAFTO RELY ON OUR PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORIES.
RING BELL
THEY MEET THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMPANY, MR. PHIL WHITE, AND THE HEAD OF MARKETING, MS. CATHY KURZBACHER, WHO TELL THEM ALL ABOUT THE COMPANY OVER COFFEE AND GIANT CHOCOLATE-CHIP COOKIES.
OUR MACHINE WAS INTRODUCED IN 1957 AND REMAINS THE WORLD'S BEST-SELLING MANUAL TAPE DISPENSER.
ON JUNE 7, 2004, WE SOLD OUR ONE-MILLIONTH MACHINE!
AH HM!
I'M SO PROUD TO BE A PART OF THIS!
BETTER PACKAGES
THEY TAKE A TOUR OF THE PLANT AND MR. WHITE DESCRIBES HOW MOST OF THE PARTS FOR THE TAPE DISPENSERS ARE MADE LOCALLY.
THE BRUSH IS MADE IN LONDONDERRY, NEW HAMPSHIRE... THE BOTTLE IS MADE RIGHT HERE IN SHELTON... SOME OF THE PLASTIC PARTS COME FROM DEEP RIVER...
NO KIDDING?
HUH!
WE PUT A SPECIAL COATING UNDER THE PAINT TO PREVENT RUST...
OUR DISTRIBUTORS COMPLAIN THAT THE MACHINE IS TOO SOLID AND LASTS TOO LONG! THERE'S NO REPLACEMENT SALES!
INCREDIBLE!
ROBBIT... LOOK AT THIS ITEM!
BIG INCH
LUST 4 DESIRE
I MUST HAVE ONE OF THESE!
HEH HEH! THAT'S AN OLD MASKING-TAPE DISPENSER FROM THE 1940S... WE DON'T MAKE THAT MODEL ANYMORE, BUT WE HAVE TO KEEP ONE FOR OUR HISTORIC DISPLAY...
WOW! IT'S HEAVY! CAN I HAVE THIS AS A SOUVENIR??
MAYBE WE CAN FIND ONE ON EBAY...
IT'S SO PERFECT!
BIG INCH
THEY FIND OUT THAT BETTER PACKAGES IS INDEED A SMALL, INDEPENDENT COMPANY THAT IS CONSTANTLY BEING STALKED BY VENTURE CAPITALISTS. BUT, TO QUOTE MR. WHITE, "WE HAVE NO DESIRE TO SELL OUT," AND, "HOW RICH DO YOU HAVE TO BE!?"
BACK ON THE STREET, ALINE'S SELLING GENES ARE ALL ACTIVATED...
IF ALL A THESE EBAY MAIL-ORDER BIZNESSES, FOR EXAMPLE, COULD BE MADE AWARE THAT THEY'D REDUCE THEIR CARBON FOOTPRINT WITH BIOLOGICALLY SAFE WATER-ACTIVATED TAPE INSTEAD OF THE PRESSURE-SENSITIVE PLASTIC TAPE THAT EMITS V.O.C.,* IMAGINE THE SPIKE IN THIS COMPANY'S R.O.I.**!
JEEZIZ! PROMOTIONS— ANOTHER CAREER YOU COULDA HAD...
BETTER PACKAGES
*V.O.C.: VOLATILE ORGANIC COMPOUNDS
**R.O.I.: RETURN ON INVESTMENT
TAPE DISPENSERS... IT'S NOT A VERY "SEXY BUSINESS."...
YEAH, BUT JUST THINK, THOMAS EDISON INVENTED WATER-ACTIVATED TAPE! THIS IS THE VANISHING AMERICA WE DREAM ABOUT!
KIN WE GET A DONUT NOW?
End

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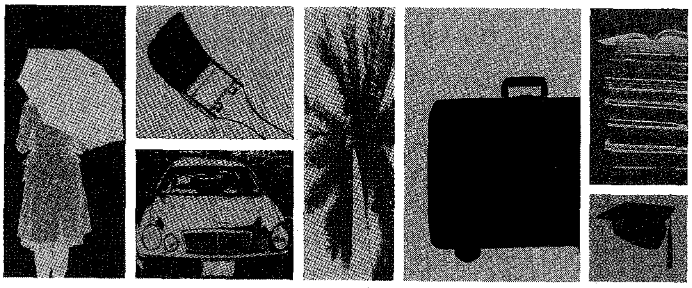

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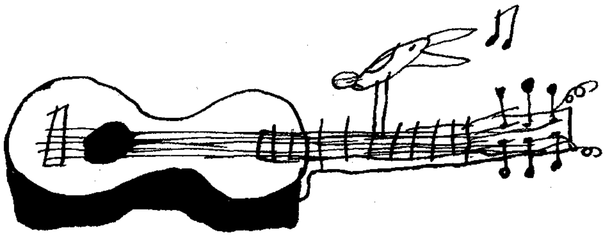


A CRITIC AT LARGE

MOVABLE TYPES

How "War and Peace" works.

BY JAMES WOOD

"Alive, and very much so," Tolstoy's diary entry for November 19, 1889, begins. That is how it feels to be caught up in the bright sweep of Tolstoy's "War and Peace": alive, and very much so. It is to succumb to the contagion of vitality. As his characters infect each other with the high temperature of their existence, so they infect us. Count Rostov dances the Daniel Cooper at a ball, and "all who were in the ballroom looked with smiles of joy at the merry old man." His son Nikolai has "that merry brotherly tenderness with which all fine young men treat everyone when they are happy." The Rostov girls are "always smiling at something (probably their own happiness)"; one of them, Natasha, loves to order the servants around, but they "liked carrying out Natasha's orders as they did no one else's." The fat, naïve, bumbling hero of the novel, Pierre Bezukhov, is so infectious that footmen "joyfully rushed to help him off with his cloak and take his stick and hat." We cannot resist these people, and they cannot resist themselves: Nikolai goes to war "because he could not resist the wish to go galloping across a level field," and when the French start running toward him he is amazed that anyone would want to kill him: "To kill me? *Me*, whom everybody loves so?" Likewise, when Pierre is captured by the French he has a revelation of infinity that is also a revelation of his own infinity. Looking up at the numberless stars, he thinks, "And all this is mine, and all this is in me, and all this is me! . . . And all this they've caught and put in a shed and boarded it up!"

Because this immense sense of self hums its own intoxicating music, these characters cannot play in the milder orchestras of give-and-take, and are often poor at crediting the discrete existence of others. But how vividly Tolstoy communicates their vitality to us! A major new translation of "War and Peace," by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (Knopf; $37), brings us their palpability as perhaps never before. There is the "little princess," Prince Andrei's wife, with her short upper lip and faint mustache; and the soldier Denisov, with his "short fingers covered with hair"; and a shirtless Napoleon grunting, "Do it hard, keep going," to the valet who is vigorously brushing his fat back and fat hairy chest; and the wise old Russian general Kutuzov, tired and sagging, who is always yawning through war councils (but who has a swivel eye for the girls); and the smooth Russian diplomat Bilibin, with his pompous habit of gathering the skin over his eyebrows when he is about to produce a bon mot.

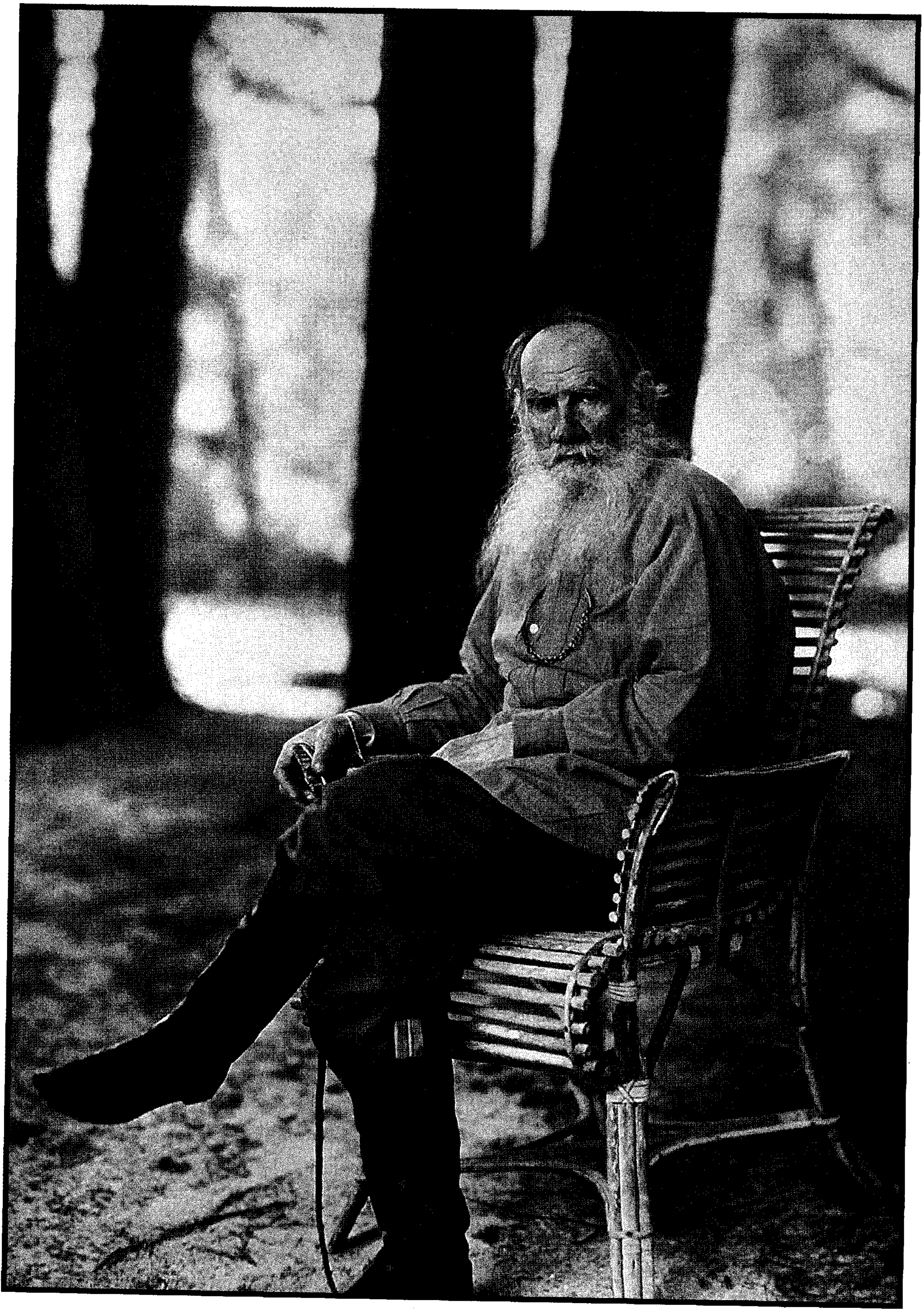
Tolstoy is the great novelist of physical involuntariness. The body helplessly confesses itself, and the novelist seems merely to run and catch its spilled emotion. A friend of the novelist's, the critic Aleksandr Druzhinin, ribbed him about it in a letter: "You are sometimes on the point of saying that so-and-so's thighs showed that he wanted to travel in India!" The old patriarch Prince Bolkonsky, for instance, loves his son, Andrei, and his daughter, Marya, so fiercely that he cannot express that love in any form except spiteful bullying, yelling in the presence of his spinsterish daughter, "If only some fool would marry her!" His hands register "the still persistent and much-enduring strength of fresh old age," but his face occasionally betrays suppressed tenderness. As he says farewell to his son, who is going to war, he is his usual self, gruffly shouting "Off with you!" Yet "something twitched in the lower part of the old prince's face."

Tolstoy can seem almost childlike in his simplicity, because he is not embarrassed to do the kind of thing beloved of children's and fairy-tale writers when they read the emotions on the face of a cat or a donkey. When Prince Andrei's wife dies in childbirth, her dead face appears to say to the living, "Ah, what have you done to me?" The old prince's valet can "read" his master's body; he knows that if the prince is "stepping full on his heels" something is up. At a ball in St. Petersburg, the sixteen-year-old Natasha Rostov has just finished a dance and, intoxicated with happiness, would like to rest. But someone asks her to dance again, and she agrees, flashing a smile at the man she will eventually become engaged to, Prince Andrei, who has been watching her. Tolstoy explains the smile:

> That smile said: "I'd be glad to rest and sit with you; I'm tired; but you see, I've been asked to dance, and I'm glad of it, and I'm happy, and I love everybody, and you and I understand all that," and much, much more.

Readers always feel that Tolstoy is both an intrusive narrator—breaking in to explain things, telling us what to think, writing essays and sermons—and a miraculously absent one, who simply lets his world narrate itself. As Isaac Babel put it, "If the world could write by itself, it would write like Tolstoy." There is a sense in which Tolstoy is saying to us—to dare a Tolstoyan reading of Tolstoy, for a minute—"I will gladly help you read Natasha's or Pierre's or the little princess's face, but, really, anyone could do it. You don't need me. For these are the largest, most universal, most natural emotions, not the precious little sweets of the stylish novelist." The old prince, ignoring his son Andrei's

Tolstoy can seem at once an intrusive narrator, telling us what to think, and an absent one, letting the world speak for itself.



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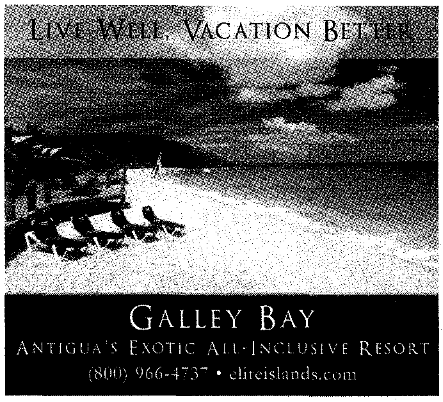

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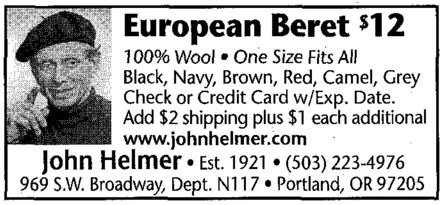

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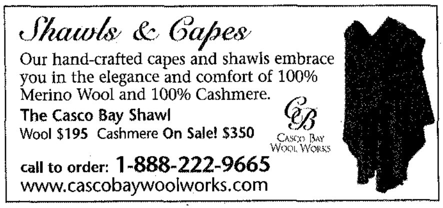

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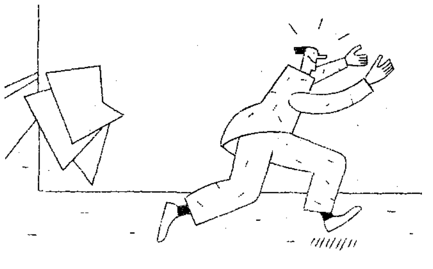
efforts to tell him about Napoleon's designs, breaks into croaky song, and sings "in an old man's off-key voice." A few pages later, we see "the old prince in his old man's spectacles and his white smock." An old man with an old man's voice and old man's spectacles: Tolstoy pushes such characterization toward the simplest tautology: What was the old man like? He was like an old man—that is to say, like all old men. What is a young man like? He is like a young man—that is to say, like all young men. What is a happy young woman like? Like all happy young women. The Austrian minister of war is described thus: "He had an intelligent and characteristic head." A character will tend to look characteristic in both senses of the word: full of character, and somehow typical.

There is a powerful tension in Tolstoy's work between persons and types, the particular and the general, freedom and laws. The quintessential Tolstoyan atmosphere is one in which highly particularized characters, with their hairy fingers and short lips, experience universal emotions that might easily be transferred from one character to another. This is why the minor characters are as alive as the major ones. In the novel's epilogue, Nikolai Rostov's aged mother, the Countess, hears the conversation around her and suddenly perks up. She had finished her tea, Tolstoy writes, "and clearly wished to find a pretext for getting angry after eating." Now, that is a very Tolstoyan observation, but it is not unique to the Countess. Almost anyone of a certain age in this novel might have felt the same way. (Chekhov, who learned so much from Tolstoy, is comparably subtle, but without the urge to generalize.)

Babel's conceit, about Tolstoy's work being so life-filled that he somehow does not seem to write at all, has been the dominant modern tribute paid to the Master's animism, from Matthew Arnold's admonition that we should take "Anna Karenina" not as a work of art but as a "piece of life" to A. N. Wilson's assertion that "War and Peace," "for seven-eighths of the time . . . does not feel as if it is being narrated at all." The paradox is not only that "War and Peace" can seem unwritten, even though the accumulated drafts amount to five thousand pages. It is also that its author can seem unread, someone who has never needed to read anybody else's fiction, even though he was a gigantic reader of fiction in English, French, and German, a devotee of Stendhal, Sterne, Dickens, Goethe, Flaubert, Thackeray. (He especially loved another novel set during the Napoleonic Wars, "Vanity Fair.") For all that, he described "War and Peace" as "not a novel," and saw Russian fiction as best represented by its awkward misfits, like Gogol's "Dead Souls" and Dostoyevsky's barely fictionalized book about the Siberian prison camp, "The House of the Dead"—unconventional works that were nothing like what he called "European forms."

Tolstoy wrote this enormous not-a-novel between 1863 and 1868, and it is thought that one of his early intentions was to write a domestic saga in the English, Trollopian mode. In his diaries for September, 1865, one can find the following: "Read Trollope, good." A few days later, he is still admiring Trollope, who "overwhelms me with his skill." But by October 3rd he has "finished Trollope. Too much that is conventional." That is the key to the restless zeal with which he began to write and rewrite his novel, his impatience with conscripted conventions. Though "all of life" may course through the book—birth, death, marriage, warfare—the writing has none of the serial vividness of Thackeray or Dickens or, indeed, Dostoyevsky. (One thinks of the gathering in Dostoyevsky's "Demons" into which a man bursts shouting, "The suburbs are on fire!") The undulations of "dramatic conflict" are levelled. Cliff-hangers become hill-walkers. The beginning seems arbitrary (a trivial salon) and the fatigued closure still tends to disappoint (an epilogue concerning quiet domestic life seven years after the great events of 1812).

Perhaps Tolstoy really didn't know where to start or end. He had originally wanted to write about 1856, and a patrician revolutionary's return to Russian life from long Siberian exile. He himself had bitter experience of the mood of futility that characterized the years just after the



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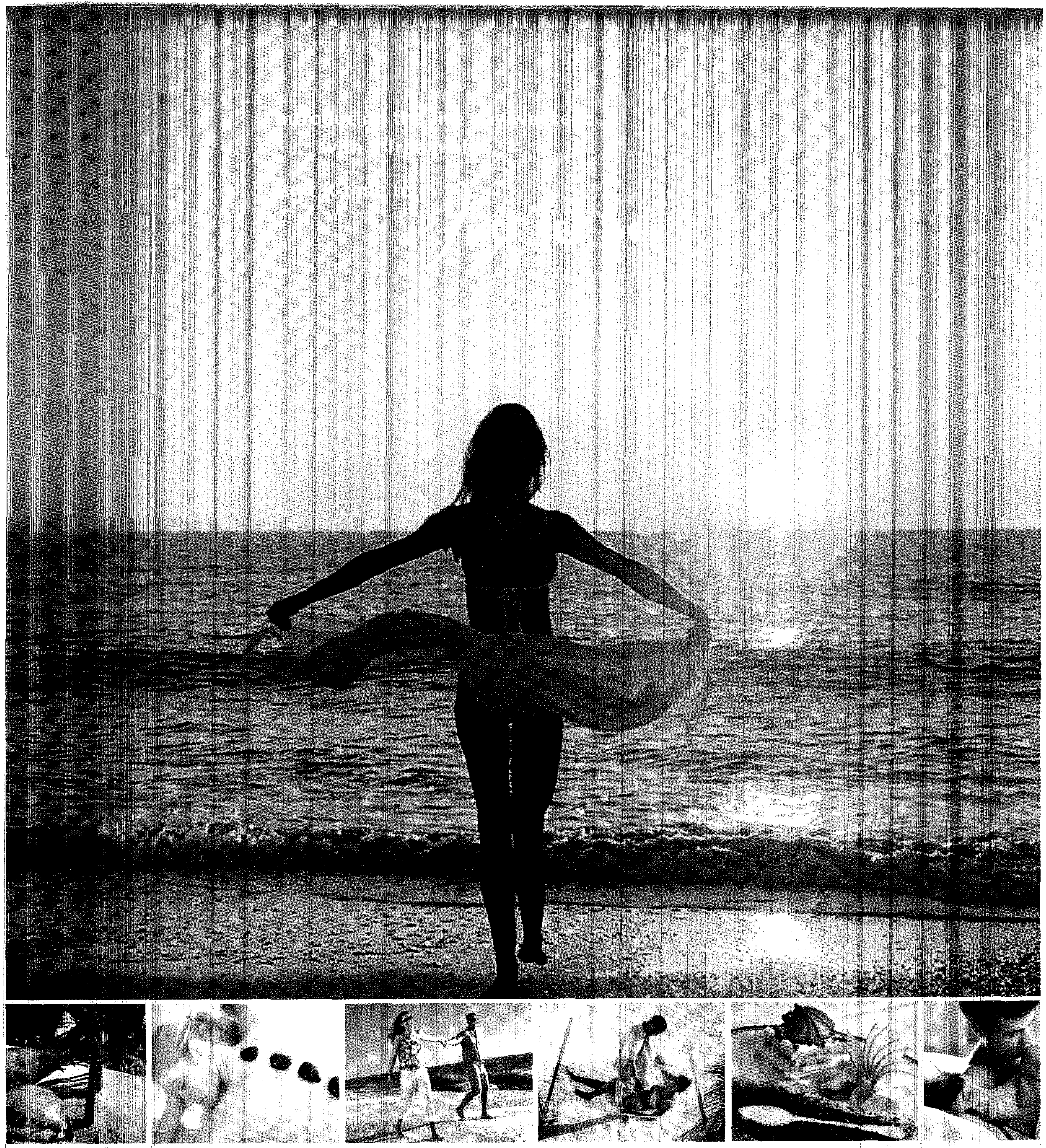

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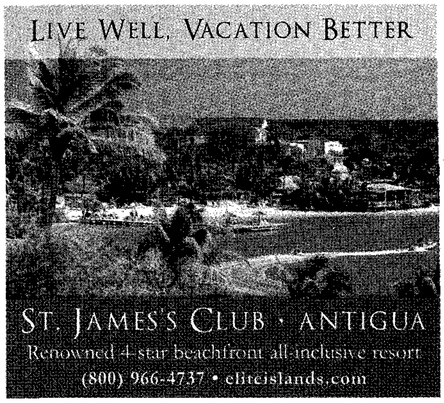
pointless blundering of the Crimean War. He had fought in the Crimea, had witnessed the bloody suttee of that campaign, where men willingly sacrificed themselves on the national pyre, and for nothing. His "Sebastopol Sketches" lucidly described the opacities of war. In order to write well about 1856, however, he felt that he needed to go back to 1825, when the upper-class rebels known as the Decembrists were executed and exiled. But 1825 could not be evoked, Tolstoy explained in a note, without the great year 1812, when Napoleon invaded Russia and occupied Moscow for four weeks. And 1812 would need 1805 as preparation, which is when the novel opens. Whatever Tolstoy's precise intentions, in 1865 he began to shape the quiet "English" novel—at this point still called "All's Well That Ends Well"—into a Russian epic about Alexander and Napoleon; by 1867-68, he was writing about the savage national trauma of 1812, and beginning to add long essays on warfare, freedom and determinism, and the philosophy of history. Here was the most flagrant strike against the "pure" European form of the novel. Tolstoy barges into his own work, and unloads his years of reading and thinking about history on the reader, with an autodidact's sleepless certitude. A fictional description of the battle of Borodino gives way to a military history of the actual battle, complete with a map of the battlefield. "*Il se répète! Et il philosophise!!*" a shocked Flaubert commented. Some contemporary Russian critics, too, were appalled by this didactic, philosophical presence.

But the essays belong with the fictional narrative, as peace belongs to war. Essentially, "War and Peace" is the story of two families and an outrider: the Rostovs, zestful Moscow aristocrats; the Bolkonskys, ruled by the domineering old prince, on his country estate; and Pierre Bezukhov, the large, lofty, comic quester who becomes involved with both families. In the "peace" of the novel's title, people give birth, and die, and marry, and think and talk and dine. But "peace" is inevitably intertwined with "war." Nikolai Rostov and his brother, Petya, go off to fight Napoleon, as does Prince Andrei Bolkonsky. Having been wounded at Austerlitz in 1805, and having lost his wife in childbirth, Andrei becomes engaged to the irrepressible Natasha Rostov. She breaks off that engagement in a spasm of fickleness, but is haunted by it; indeed, she will nurse the dying Andrei, mortally wounded at Borodino, in 1812. Nikolai, who is all bold charm and youthful high spirits—Tolstoy writes that before Austerlitz he is momentarily aimless, because "there was no one to cut down (as he had always pictured battle to himself)"—survives the war, and marries Andrei's sister, Princess Marya. The fat, inquisitive metaphysician Pierre marries, separates, becomes a Mason, is widowed, and, wearing an absurd white hat and green tailcoat, blunders into the theatre of war at Borodino. He returns to Moscow as the French are closing in on the city, garbed in a coachman's caftan and determined to assassinate Napoleon. He is obviously "a disguised gentleman," Tolstoy writes, perhaps presciently, since this was the kind of costume that Tolstoy himself wore in fierce, bearded later life, looking for all the world like a landowning Moses wrapped in an eiderdown. There is a very funny moment in which caftanned Pierre is spotted by the Rostovs as they are leaving Moscow, fleeing from the French. Natasha, characteristically, hangs out of the carriage, exclaiming, "Look, for God's sake, it's Bezukhov!" Pierre is eventually captured by the French, held for more than a month, and nearly executed. In time, he marries Natasha; the novel's epilogue brings a description of the happy marriages of these two couples, Nikolai and Marya and Pierre and Natasha. All's well that ends well.

Or not, because the epilogue concludes not with the fictional narrative but with a final, dragonish blast from the flaming, irritable, essay-writing Tolstoy, eager to put us right about freedom and predestination. "War and Peace" is "not a novel" but a frequently essayistic national epic, and this side of the story also involves two families and an outrider—the two "families" of the French and Russian nations, and Napoleon, who forced them together when he invaded Russia and took Moscow, in 1812. "War and Peace" vibrates with anti-Napoleonic anger; the irony is that this novel about great egotists and solipsists (Pierre and Andrei are just the chief representatives), written by perhaps the greatest egotist ever to put pen to paper, is a cannon aimed directly at the egotism of Napoleon. As a result, Tolstoy the novelist, whenever he describes Napo-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leon dramatically, cannot help crediting the very vitality that Tolstoy the Russian patriot hates.

Tolstoy objected to the way Napoleon's solipsism and vanity ("It was clear that only what went on in *his* soul was of interest to him," he writes) was indulged by so much nineteenth-century historical writing, which essentially agreed with Hegel's quip that Napoleon was the World Spirit on horseback. The aggression of the narrative descriptions of Napoleon gains power from the aggression of the historical essays, in which Tolstoy recurringly argues against the cult of the "great man." The writers and philosophers whom Tolstoy had started reading in earnest in the mid-eighteen-sixties were inclined to think that in 1812, as Tolstoy puts it, millions of people went from west to east and slaughtered each other to no purpose, all because one man told them to. Even those who admitted many and various historical causes never admitted enough. For there are billions of causes of such a bloody migration, Tolstoy says, from Napoleon's war lust to the most humble hussar's need to be fed and paid. And that would be the wrong way to order things anyway, because, according to Tolstoy, Napoleon's ambition probably has less to do with historical determinations than with the hussar's blind need.

What should absorb us as historians is not the singular glory of a Napoleon but the mute, inglorious lives of ordinary people—what Tolstoy calls the "swarmlike life, where man inevitably fulfills the laws prescribed for him." He writes, "Kings are the slaves of history. History, that is, the unconscious swarmlike life of mankind, uses every moment of a king's life as an instrument for its purposes." Napoleon himself was a slave to historical inevitability, since what happened was always going to happen. Every action of the so-called great men, "which to them seems willed by themselves, in the historical sense is not willed, but happens in connection with the whole course of history and has been destined from before all ages." Tolstoy's conclusion is epistemological skepticism. We know much less than we thought we did: "The more we try to explain sensibly these phenomena of history, the more senseless and incomprehensible they become for us." Only by admitting the most infinitesimal units for observation "can we hope to comprehend the laws of history."

Tolstoy thus has the commitment to rich, ordinary detail that the Annales school of history made famous a hundred years later. But he does not believe that any narrative can describe a historical event successfully. He believes that history has laws, and he believes in divine predestination. Of the battle of Borodino, he writes, "The terrible thing continued to be accomplished, which was accomplished not by the will of men, but by the will of Him who governs people and worlds." But these laws are only partly discoverable; even if we were to describe accurately all the causes of a historical event we would still be unable to describe "the one cause of all causes." Tolstoy believes that we are not free but that we have to believe we are, in order to live. Reason expresses the laws of necessity, he writes. Yet consciousness expresses the essence of freedom. Consciousness says, "I am alone, and all that exists is only I." So Tolstoy's "public" history-writing is consonant with his "private" novel-writing: in war and in peace, we feel like persons, but helplessly obey the laws of typology (a young man is like all young men).

There are considerable contradictions here. One is that the great historiographical skeptic is also a great sermonizing bully, not only telling us what we must think but clearly writing a form of history himself. (As the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky succinctly put it, "He was history itself.") Another is that the novelist who sermonizes about the "swarmlike life" of men is a novelist who seldom writes about ordinary people. Yet another is that "War and Peace," for all its radical unconventionality, emits that characteristically vague growl of nineteenth-century doubt in which God is no longer describable but impossible to abandon. War, rendered so painstakingly in all its senselessness and evil, finally serves only to confirm God's benevolent presence, however spectral. A theodicy is begun, and then fudged. In this respect, Thomas Hardy, say, was a bolder novelist. And isn't there a special tension between the novelist who insists on predestination and the novelist who wants to give his own characters—his own creations—the freedom to break away from him? Tolstoy's radical relaxation of the melodramas of conventional "plot" is an unwinding of authorial tyranny, but he has a coercive tendency to bully toward Christian widsom the heroes he most cares about—Andrei and Pierre, Levin, Ivan Ilyich. Again, Napoleon is the interesting challenge: Tolstoy must make him vital without making him seem too vital, and thus too free. He must remain a deluded slave of historical forces beyond his control.

Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky's translation gives us new access to the spirit and order of the book. Literary translators tend to divide into what one could call originalists and activists. The former honor the original text's quiddities, and strive to reproduce them as accurately as possible in the translated language; the latter are less concerned with literal accuracy than with the transposed musical appeal of the new work. Any decent translator must be a bit of both. Though Tolstoy has been well served in English, his translators, like Constance Garnett, Rosemary Edmonds, and Aylmer and Louise Maude, have tended to be somewhat activist, sidestepping difficult words, smoothing the rhythm of the Russian, and eliminating one of Tolstoy's most distinctive elements, repetition. Pevear and Volokhonsky, who are justly celebrated for their translations of Dostoyevsky, are closer to the originalist camp than to the activist. Without being Nabokovians (Nabokov used such clanking words as "mollitude" in his outlandishly literal translation of "Eugene Onegin," and insisted on calling Stiva Oblonsky, in "Anna Karenina," "Steve"), they want the English to sound as close to the Russian as possible, and they are fervent about the importance of "roughening up" their versions when the Russian demands it. Translation is not a transfer of meaning from one language to another, Pevear writes, but a dialogue between two languages.

For instance, there is a famous scene in "War and Peace" when Prince Andrei visits his family estates in Ryazan. On the way, in a forest, he sees a great, gnarled oak, surrounded by trees already succumbing to spring. He feels like the oak: it seems to say (here is one of Tolstoy's characters now "reading" a tree!), "Spring, and love, and happiness . . . senseless deception!" But, returning a month later, he cannot at first identify the oak, because it has leafed out like all the other trees:

> The whole day had been hot, there was a thunderstorm gathering somewhere, but only a small cloud had sent a sprinkle over the dust of the road and the juicy leaves. The left side of the woods was dark, in the shade; the right side, wet, glossy, sparkled in the sun, barely swayed by the wind. Everything was in flower; nightingales throbbed and trilled, now near, now far. . . . The old oak, quite transformed, spreading out a canopy of juicy, dark greenery, basked, barely swaying, in the rays of the evening sun. Of the gnarled fingers, the scars, the old grief and mistrust—nothing could be seen. Juicy green leaves without branches broke through the stiff, hundred-year-old bark, and it was impossible to believe that this old fellow had produced them. "Yes, it's the same oak," thought Prince Andrei, and suddenly a causeless springtime feeling of joy and renewal came over him.

Tolstoy's repetition of that adjective "juicy"—three times in a short passage—is typical, and should not deserve the scorn of the Flaubertian fanatic. Flaubert, the agonist of style, swatted repetitions like insects, and today's copy editor, no less than Tolstoy's early translators, is post-Flaubertian in this way. But Tolstoy surely wants the word "juicy" to take the weight of Andrei's renewed optimism; if the passage is written in a loose, free indirect style, we should feel Andrei coming back to this word in his half-articulated thoughts, feel the sap flowing, slowly, then faster, through his veins. "Sappy" is, indeed, the word that Constance Garnett uses to translate the Russian *sochnye*, and, unusually for her, she uses the same word three times, like Tolstoy. The Maudes use "sappy," too, but drop the third iteration, as if it were slightly embarrassing. Anthony Briggs, in his 2005 translation, renders the word as "lush," uses it twice, and then substitutes "succulent." "Juicy" is a precise translation of the Russian; but the striking comparison is between the rhythm of Pevear and Volokhonsky and the rhythm of the other translators. Here is Garnett:

> The whole day had been hot; a storm was gathering, but only a small rain-cloud had sprinkled the dust of the road and the sappy leaves. The left side of the forest was dark, lying in shadow. The right side, glistening with the raindrops, gleamed in the sunlight, faintly undulating in the wind.

This sounds like good English, while Pevear and Volokhonsky's version, with its hiccupped run-on, does not: "The whole day had been hot, there was a thunderstorm gathering somewhere, but only a small cloud had sent a sprinkle over the dust of the road and the juicy leaves." More than that, their prose sounds, in the course of the entire scene, like a man working his way toward an appre-

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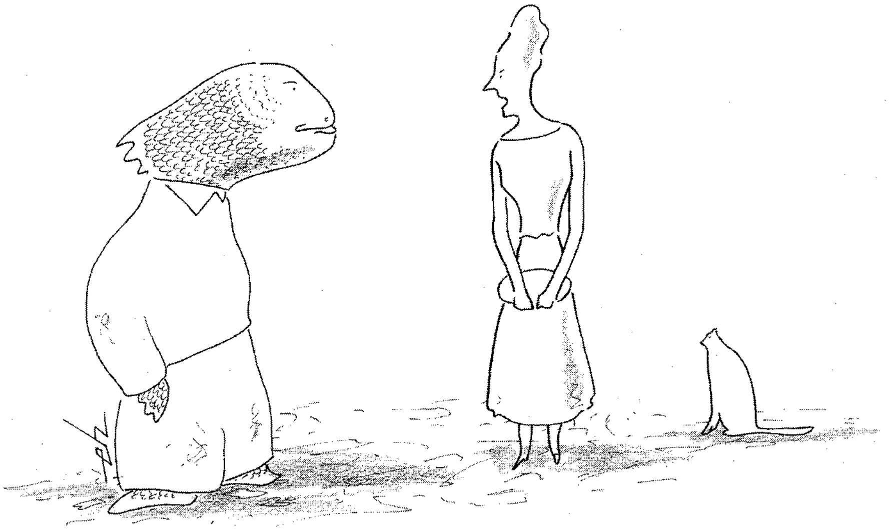
hension. "Of the gnarled fingers, the scars, the old grief and mistrust—nothing could be seen": this has the dynamic intermittence of actual thought. The Maudes' "Neither gnarled fingers nor old scars nor old doubts and sorrows were any of them in evidence now" sounds like an English lyric poet—Housman, perhaps.

Richard Pevear, in an eloquent introduction, provides a startling example of the ways in which translators do not simply tidy up texts but make things "clear" that they deem obscure. In the novel's epilogue, Marya enters the nursery: "The children were riding to Moscow on chairs and invited her to come with them." That is exactly what Tolstoy writes, because he wants us to experience a little shock of readjustment as the adult meets the otherworldliness of childish fantasy. But Garnett, the Maudes, and Briggs all insert an explanatory "playing at," to make things easier for the adults. As the Maudes render it, "The children were playing at 'going to Moscow' in a carriage made of chairs, and invited her to go with them."

This might seem like a trivial point, but it is a little clue to the vision of the whole novel. Tolstoy sees reality as a system of constant adjustments, a long, tricky convoy of surprises, as realities jostle together and the vital, solipsistic ego is affronted by the otherness of the world. Nikolai Rostov thinks that warfare is a glamorous business of "cutting people down." But warfare is nothing like that, and when he finally has the chance to cut down a Frenchman he cannot do it, because the soldier's face is not that of an enemy but "a most simple, homelike face." He gets a medal and is called a hero, but can think only, "So that's all there is to so-called heroism?" By the time Prince Andrei fights at Borodino, he has lost any sense he once had that a battle can be successfully commanded, and applauds General Kutuzov for at least knowing when to leave well enough alone. On a trip home, he sees two girls stealing plums from the estate's trees, and is comforted, feeling "the existence of other human interests, totally foreign to him and as legitimate as those that concerned him."

One of the great sequences of adjustment involves Pierre's experience as a prisoner of the French, during which he undergoes a colossal moral correction, brought on by witnessing the execution of his fellow-captives and by listening to the wise old peasant Platon Karataev, who preaches a kind of Christian stoicism. Pierre watches as four men are shot by the French. Now it is the turn of the fifth, a factory worker, a thin boy of eighteen. Pierre will be next. The factory worker is blindfolded, but, just before he is killed, he straightens the knot at the back of his head, to make it more comfortable. It is a superb scene, every detail charged, as if lit by lightning: the pale, frightened faces of the French executioners, the young French soldier who stands by the pit where the bodies are being buried, swaying back and forth like a drunkard, and then the comment of one of the French soldiers: "That'll teach them to set fires." Tolstoy, in his simple, fairy-tale mode, somehow at once the intrusive narrator

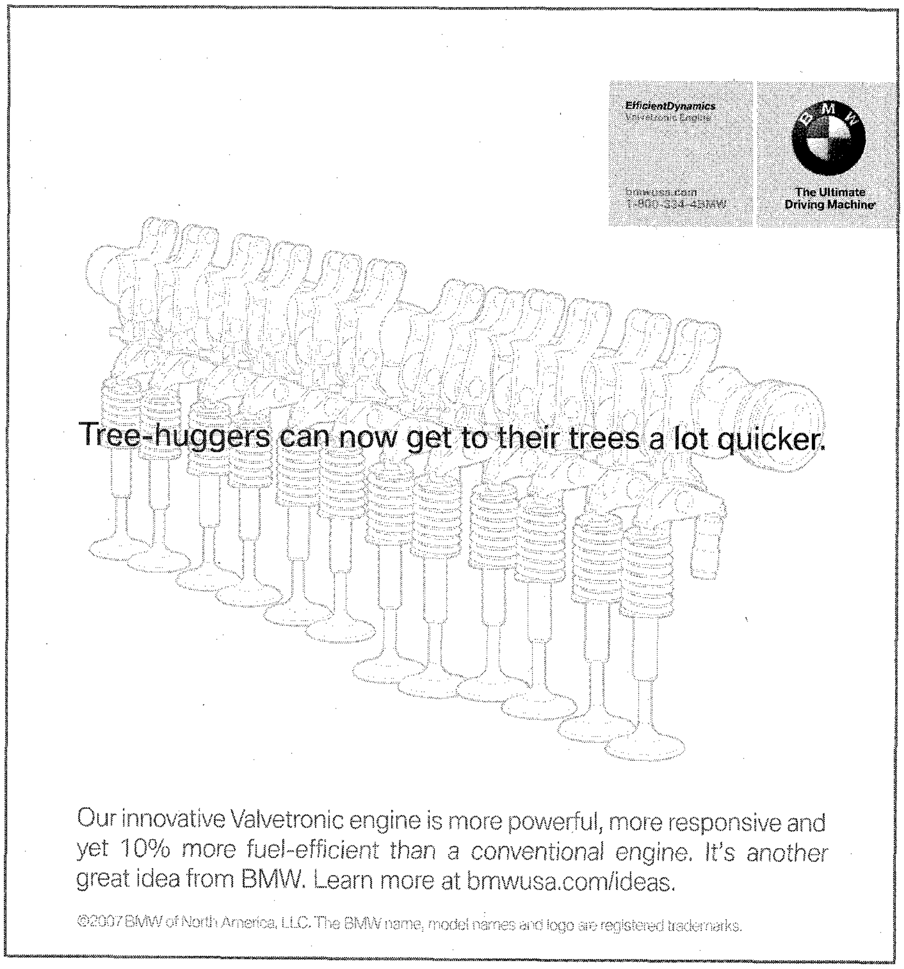


"For a fish, you hold your own in an argument."

and as absent as air, has Pierre decode this muttering: "It was a soldier who wanted to comfort himself at least somehow for what had been done, but could not." (Again, a universal shame is given particularity by a minor character.)

What strikes us nowadays is the mysterious pointlessness of the man fiddling with his blindfold just before death. It was perhaps with the help of Tolstoy's instruction that George Orwell watched a condemned Burmese man, in his essay "A Hanging," walk toward the gallows and swerve to avoid a puddle on the way. Both Tolstoy and Orwell are making a point about uniqueness and typicality. The human animal will tend to look after its own interests, even when the gesture is so useless that it seems not typical but radically individual. And Tolstoy the determinist is doubtless interested in the nature of the action: is the condemned man exercising the sweetest gratuity of his free will or helplessly responding to the discomfort of the knot? Either way, the absolute selfishness (in the most basic sense) of another man must be instructive to the self-sufficient Pierre. After his experiences, his sense of the differences of other people begins to expand. The factory worker adjusts his blindfold and dies; Pierre, figuratively speaking, adjusts his blindfold and lives.

The adjustment of vision forced on us by the condemned man, or even the children riding to Moscow, is related to a technique for which Tolstoy was praised by the Russian formalist critics of the nineteen-twenties and later—estrangement, or the art of making the familiar unfamiliar. Sometimes, this involves seeing the world as a child might. When Natasha goes to the opera, she refuses to see anything but painted cardboard and men and women peculiarly dressed, and finds the whole thing false and pretentious. Tolstoy is never greater in this novel than when, like Natasha at the opera, he refuses to make sense of warfare. Again and again, he reverses the martial tapestry and shoves the clumsy, illegible tufts of thread at us. Nikolai Rostov, standing on a wooden bridge in Enns, hears a rattling "as if someone had spilled nuts," and a man falls beside him. A bullet sounds as if it were "complaining about something." In one of the most beautiful of the novel's scenes, Nikolai's younger brother, Petya, riding with his comrades Denisov and



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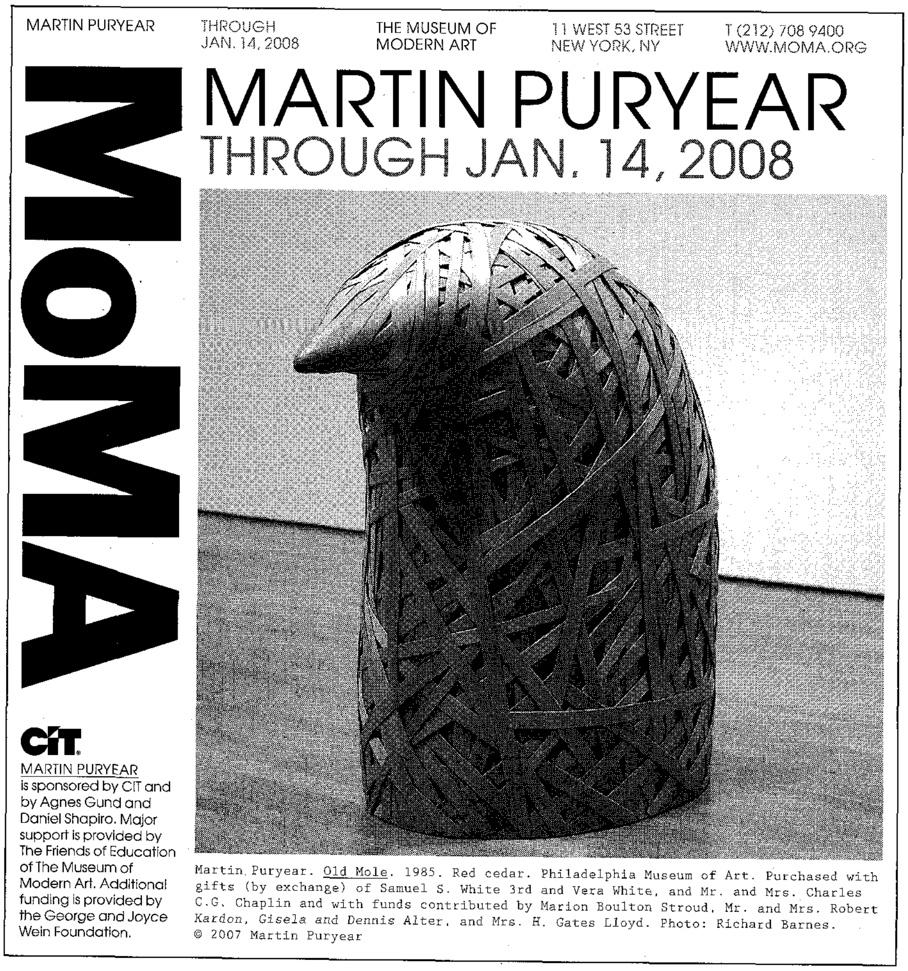

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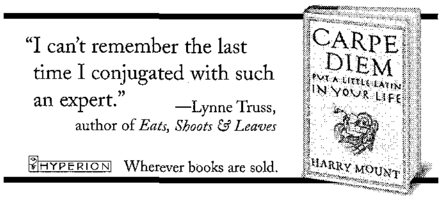
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Dolokhov, and some Cossack soldiers, foolishly gallops into a storm of French fire and is felled. His dying is described as if by his comrades, who cannot make sense of what is happening: "Petya galloped on his horse across the manor courtyard, and, instead of holding the reins, waved both arms somehow strangely and quickly, and kept sliding further and further to one side in his saddle." Eventually, he falls heavily onto the wet ground. Denisov—he of the short, hairy fingers—approaches the body and, as he looks at Petya, "irrelevantly" recalls him once saying, "I'm used to something sweet. Excellent raisins, take them all." There follows this extraordinarily moving sentence: "And the Cossacks glanced around in surprise at the sounds, similar to a dog's barking, with which Denisov quickly turned away, went to the wattle fence, and caught hold of it."

It is a very modern piece of writing and a very ancient one, as is so often the case with Tolstoy. Stephen Crane learned a great deal from Tolstoy about this kind of writing; in "The Red Badge of Courage," a man with a shoeful of blood "hopped like a schoolboy in a game." Ian McEwan uses a similar technique in the Dunkirk section of "Atonement." But, if the hacking lament that sounds oddly like the barking of a dog is an example of modern estrangement, that young man gripping the wattle fence in grief and those startled Cossacks—especially the transfer of the emotion from the mourner to the Cossacks, from the involved audience to a less involved audience—seem almost Biblical. (In Genesis, when Joseph, in disguise, meets his brothers, "he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.")

Tolstoy appears to write slightingly of women at one moment in the book, when he says, "About the war Princess Marya thought as women think about war. She feared for her brother, who was there; was horrified, not understanding it." Another generalization: all women think like this. But the novel argues that no one understands war—indeed, that no one understands history. Napoleon says, on the eve of the battle of Borodino, "The chessmen are set up," but a few pages earlier Pierre has likened war to a game of chess, only to earn Andrei's scorn: "Yes . . . only with this small difference, that in chess you can think over each move as long as you like, you're outside the conditions of time." It is not, of course, a small difference; it is everything. If no one can understand war, then simply to fear for one's brother, and to be horrified, is precisely to understand what can be understood of war. It is the right response, within the possible "conditions of time." War has its "conditions of time," and peace does, too.

So it is perhaps not a banal diminuendo when this novel closes its narrative with scenes, seven years after the epic disasters of 1812, from the domestic lives of Pierre and Natasha and Nikolai and Marya. These are some of the most serenely lovely passages in the book, not least because typology, which is to say, determinism, is turned on its head. It had always been the women who were talented at "reading" the faces and bodies of the men; the cowed Marya devotedly followed every twitch and spasm of her tyrannical old father, and Natasha, when Pierre first told her about his captivity, "understood precisely what he meant to convey . . . but also what he would have liked to but could not express in words." Now, at last, it is the men, the vital solipsists, who understand the wordless gestures of their wives. We see Nikolai console his wife, and Tolstoy tells us that Pierre and Natasha "also talked as only a wife and husband can talk, that is, grasping thoughts and conveying them to each other with extraordinary clarity and quickness, in a way contrary to all the rules of logic." Tolstoy then reproduces a page of this kind of illogical dialogue, one of the tenderest things he ever wrote:

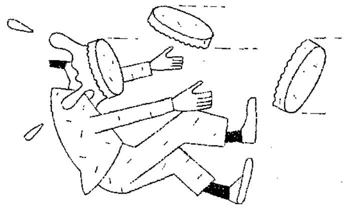
> "No, what were you saying? Speak, speak."
>
> "No, you tell me, mine was just something stupid," said Natasha.
>
> ". . . And what were you going to say?
>
> "Just something stupid."
>
> "No, but still."
>
> "It's nothing, trifles," said Natasha, her smile shining still more brightly.

These are the triumphant "insignificant trifles" of family life. Prince Andrei, the professional soldier, the brilliant adjutant to General Kutuzov, falls in battle; Napoleon, the genius of world history, fails in battle; but the amateur, unheroic blunderers, Nikolai and Pierre, survive into peace, surrounded by women, who do not understand warfare, and by children, who must not. To live, the poet Yehuda Amichai writes, is to build a ship and a harbor at the same time: "And to finish the harbor / long after the ship has gone down." ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

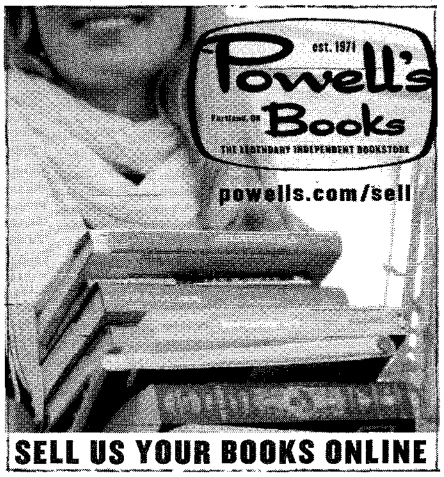
Rodolphe Töpffer: The Complete Comic Strips, *edited, and translated from the French, by David Kunzle (Mississippi; $65)*; Father of the Comic Strip, *by David Kunzle (Mississippi; $25)*. Frequently cited as the inventor of the comic strip, Töpffer, a Swiss teacher whose artistic vocation had been thwarted by poor eyesight, started producing his whimsical pictorial narratives, in 1827, for the enjoyment of friends. But, after Goethe praised the strips, Töpffer was emboldened to publish them, and they became wildly popular. The strips develop from satire—"Monsieur Jabot" concerns the disastrous affectations of a would-be dandy—to something far more bizarre: in "Monsieur Pencil," a dog trapped atop a telegraph pole brings Europe to the brink of war. As David Kunzle notes in his accompanying biography, the apparently casual style of the drawings masks considerable sophistication. Late in life, Töpffer produced an essay expounding a theory of the doodle, and demonstrating that, to a viewer, even an approximately drawn face seems to possess character.

The Complete Dream of the Rarebit Fiend, *by Ulrich Merkl (Merkl; $114)*. The surreal inventiveness of Winsor McCay, a cartoonist best known for "Little Nemo in Slumberland" and the animated film "Gertie the Dinosaur," surfaced earlier in a weekly black-and-white strip that ran in U.S. newspapers between 1904 and 1913. In each episode, a new character is caught in an escalating tangle of weirdness: a man practicing for a golf tournament watches as the ground beneath his ball grows into a volcano, which then erupts; a Wall Street secretary swallows her gum, triggering a chain reaction that collapses the world financial markets; a woman standing before a gallows to witness her mother's hanging finds that her husband can't contain his glee—until, in the final panel, they awaken. Merkl, an art historian, archeologist, and bibliophile, has lovingly assembled the most complete and scholarly collection of these strips to date, reproducing McCay's phantasmagoric art at, or near, full size.



The Complete Terry and the Pirates, Volume I: 1934-1936, *by Milton Caniff (IDW Publishing; $49.95)*. In this groundbreaking adventure serial, a pair of eager Americans, a boy named Terry Lee and a young fortune hunter named Pat Ryan, land in China to search for an abandoned mine and quickly find themselves facing a succession of gangsters, warlords, pirates, and femmes fatales up and down the coast. Period colonialism and chinoiserie occasionally combine for some awkwardly overheated depictions, but Caniff visualized his setup—Robert Louis Stevenson by way of the pulps—with a cinematic flair that remains thrilling because it is played straight. Ryan, a two-fisted, often shirtless he-man, exhibits an arrestingly sexual chemistry with various bad girls.

Life, in Pictures, *by Will Eisner (Norton; $29.95)*. Eisner's career encompassed much of the history of comic art, from the birth of comic books, in the nineteen-thirties, through the contemporary efflorescence of the graphic novel (a term that Eisner popularized with the 1978 publication of "A Contract with God"). Creating the detective feature "The Spirit" in the nineteen-forties, he developed a flexibility of page layout that married visual complexity to storytelling sophistication. Late in life, inspired by the autobiographical focus of R. Crumb, Eisner began publishing stories based on his own life. The five pieces collected here include evocative accounts of suffering at the hands of anti-Semitic bullies in the Depression-era Bronx, and of early adventures in the comic-book industry. Whatever the subject, Eisner manages a light touch: every page is sure-handed, carried out with subtlety, grace, and wit.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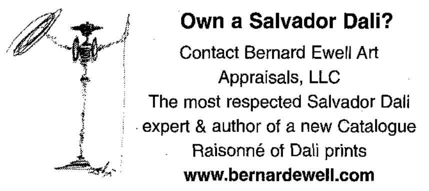
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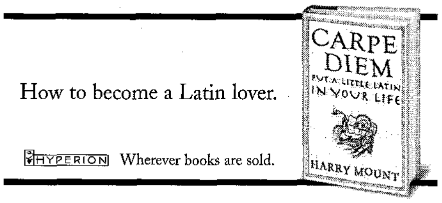
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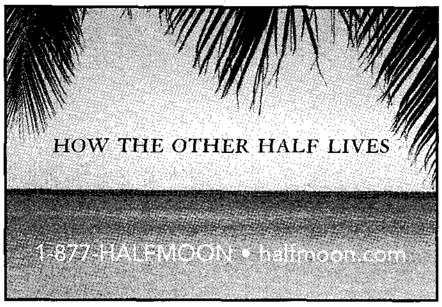
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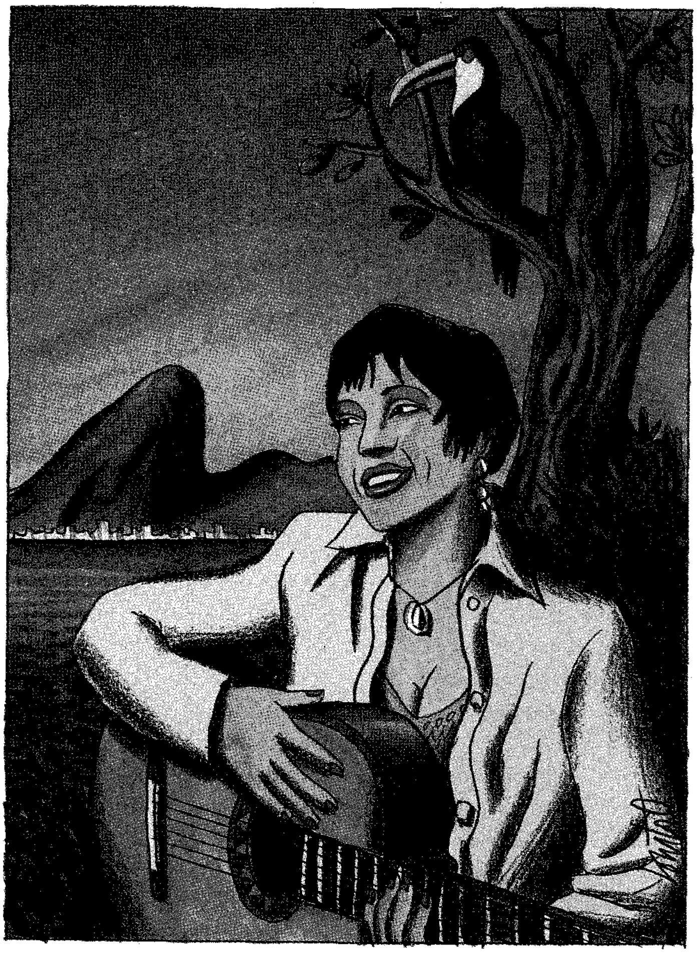
JAZZ

BACK TO BOSSA

Rosa Passos and fifty years of bossa nova.

BY GARY GIDDINS



Passos, who was six when bossa nova was born, may surpass her musical forebears.

Rosa Passos is often described as the heir to, or female equivalent of, João Gilberto, which is a way of saying that she is a distinguished interpreter of bossa nova at a time when gifted young Brazilian singers, like Marisa Monte, have adopted more fashionable pop styles. This won't necessarily sound appealing to those who recall bossa nova as an easy-listening diversion of the Kennedy years, epitomized by Astrud Gilberto's girlishly vacant invocation of "The Girl from Ipanema." But there has always been a difference between the musical phenomenon that began in Brazil in the late fifties and the watered-down version that flourished in the United States. Though the latter inspired brilliant collaborations—Stan Getz and João Gilberto; Frank Sinatra and Antonio Carlos Jobim—bossa nova quickly became a lounge-music punch line. "Blame It on the Bossa Nova," Eydie Gormé wailed, as Sergio Mendes and Brasil '66 made a sedative of "The Look of Love." In Brazil, the perspective is entirely different. While João Gilberto reigns as a god, Astrud is hardly known on the beaches of Ipanema. And many key bossa-nova figures, including the incomparable Elis Regina, never found a North American audience. The divide between the domestic bossa and its export-market derivative is sure to be much brooded over next year, when Brazil celebrates bossa nova's fiftieth anniversary.

Bossa nova grew out of long-standing samba traditions, but its emergence is usually traced to a 1958 album, "Canção do Amor Demais," by the hugely popular singer Elizete Cardoso. The album had a strange evolution. A few years earlier, Vinicius de Moraes, a playwright, poet, and diplomat, hired Jobim to write music for his play "Orfeu da Conceição." The play, a retelling of the Orpheus and Eurydice myth, was a success and generated interest in a film—the 1959 hit "Black Orpheus." But the French production company wanted a new score, leaving Vinicius scrambling for a way to introduce the songs he had written with Jobim. He chose Cardoso for her popularity and musicality, and, though initially reluctant, she agreed to make the record. (Imagine Lennon and McCartney, unable to get a record deal, having to persuade Vera Lynn to introduce their songs.) But the interpretative twist that gave the music a genuinely new feeling came from the participation of an obstreperous guitarist from Bahia, João Gilberto.

Jobim and Gilberto belonged to a generation that had grown up with bebop. While the tunes written by bebop innovators like Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Bud Powell were often too volatile and complicated for contemporary listeners, Jobim found a way of using bebop harmonies—especially the tritone, or flattened fifth—as the basis for irresistibly lyrical melodies. One of his most famous songs, "Desafinado"—the title means "slightly out of tune," or "off key"—is built almost entirely on discords. Gilberto, meanwhile, refined rhythms, banished vibrato, and subdued emotion, forging a style that was neither Brazilian samba nor American jazz. The music historian and producer Zuza Homem de Mello says that the first use of the phrase "bossa nova" was in a liner note that Jobim wrote for Gilberto, describing his "new way" of doing things; the phrase also appears in the lyric of "Desafinado."

In 1958, Rosa Passos was six years old and had been playing piano for three years. She grew up in Salvador, the capital of Bahia, her imagination fired by the early recordings of Gilberto and by the success of "Black Orpheus" (with its Luiz Bonfá score). By the age of fifteen, she was performing on local television. Yet her career was slow in taking off. She made an album in 1979, "Recriação," introducing songs written with her longtime collaborator, Fernando de Oliveira, and then retired to Brasilia, where she married and raised a family. She rarely performed during the next decade and did not record again until 1991. In 1996, her album "Pano Pra Manga" brought her renewed attention, including an appearance at the Hollywood Bowl. Jazz musicians began to discover her: she performed in Japan, Cuba, Germany, Denmark, Switzerland, and Russia, and returned to the United States for a New Orleans concert in 2001. She made several more albums, with ensembles ranging from small jazz groups to orchestras, among them "Entre Amigos," "Festa," "Eu E Meu Coração," "Azul," and "Amorosa." Yet, as good as the recordings are, Passos belongs to that dwindling tribe of performers who do their best work before an audience.

Recently, she gave her début performance at the Blue Note. She began with two songs by Dorival Caymmi, whose sambas helped define the development of Brazilian popular music during the nineteen-thirties, the period of Carmen Miranda's pre-Hollywood stardom. On "Vatapá," with its clipped, fizzy rhythm, her right hip bumped upward on the offbeats as her hands elaborated the melody, and, for a moment, you could imagine her in a fruit-bowl hat. The ballad "Marina" was a more emblematic Passos vehicle: tender, stylish, knowing. She laid out her phrases with the deliberation of an instrumentalist, behind or on the beat, conveying, even to listeners, like me, whose Portuguese is limited to "*Uma caipirinha, por favor*" and "*obrigado*," a conversational spontaneity that seemed to illuminate the emotional core of the piece.

Yo-Yo Ma, who has toured and recorded with Passos, has described her voice as "the most beautiful in the world." That's an overstatement, but only in degree. Her voice has the clarity of water, and her phrasing, all but free of vibrato and ornamentation, is colored only by the nasality that is embedded in the Portuguese language. If it isn't the most beautiful voice, it is surely one of unusual splendor, especially bewitching in the upper register, where it suggests fragility

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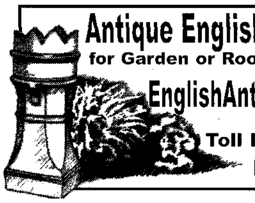

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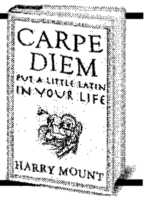

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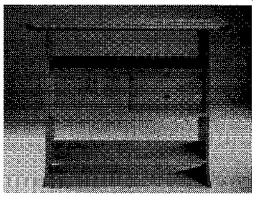

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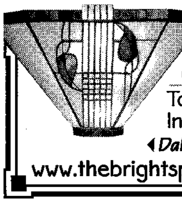

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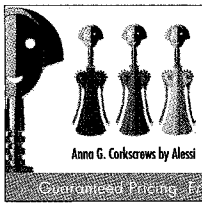

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but never breaks. Whether she whispers or shouts, her intonation is reliably solid—a crucial asset in music that values dissonance and verbose lyrics.

And she is more than a singer. Passos is a prolific songwriter and a superb rhythm guitarist in the manner of her idol, João Gilberto. When she accompanies herself, the intimacy of her style and her harmonic sophistication are underscored; her fretting hand is in constant motion, adding transitional chords to already copious harmonies, and her grasp of the fretboard is so sure that she produces far less "surface noise"—those scratching sounds made when sliding from one chord to another—than many full-time guitarists. Her most recent album, "Rosa," released last year on Telarc, is the long-awaited testimony to her self-sufficiency: she arranged the entire album for voice and guitar (except for an introductory a-cappella number) and composed nearly half of it. The confident delicacy of her attack masks fascinating details—her varied articulation of different words in the same phrase, as on the intricate "Molambo," arranged with a bolero beat, and, in her own haunting "Sutilezas," an exquisitely plaintive series of rising four-bar phrases that resolve and then rise again.

At the Blue Note, she fronted a quartet with the saxophonist Rodrigo Ursaia, the pianist Helio Alves, the bassist Paolo Paulelli, and the drummer Celso de Almeida. Passos absorbs the enthusiasm of the audience; at intervals, she plucked a flower from a vase onstage and presented it to someone sitting ringside. Short and stocky, she has a strong face with prominent cheeks and a generous mouth. She speaks little English—her stage announcements were translated by the saxophonist—but she commands attention by her emotional resolve. In this respect, she is not Gilberto's heir; she is his better. On Jobim's ingenious "Fotografia," backed by the band, she telegraphed its flirtatious romance with lilting high-note inflections and an occasional wink; in the same composer's heartbreaking "Dindi," she sighed the words; and on Ary Barroso's jubilant "É Luxo Só," accompanied only by her own acoustic guitar, she opened up her lungs and transformed a crowded downtown night club into Carnival. Then she handed out another flower. ♦

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ON TELEVISION

HIGH-SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL

Poor little rich kids on the CW.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

There was every reason to think that "Gossip Girl," one of the new fall shows on the CW, would be a hit. It comes from the kind of stock that makes it a perfect fit for a network geared toward young viewers: it's based on a best-selling series of novels for teen-age girls which are centered on the juicy extracurricular doings and desires and the brand-name possessions of the most privileged kids in the most privileged part of Manhattan—private-school students on the Upper East Side. Because this is a world open only to the few, it's of great interest to the many. (And, it goes without saying, of ginormous interest to the few.) It's not hard to imagine that girls all over the country would want to get a glimpse of this tantalizing spectacle, because they're never going to experience anything like it in real life. "Sex and the City" held open possibilities to the viewer: Come, come to New York and be fabulous! "Gossip Girl," by its very title, promises both to tell you the secrets of the city and to remind you that you weren't invited to the party. The chances of a tornado coming along to lift you up out of your farm in Kansas and deposit you (and your annual tuition fee of thirty thousand dollars) at the Constance Billard School for Girls, on Ninety-third Street, just east of Fifth Avenue, which Blair Waldorf and Serena van der Woodsen, the leading ladies of "Gossip Girl," attend, are about the same as the chances of Blair and Serena ever finding themselves in Kansas.

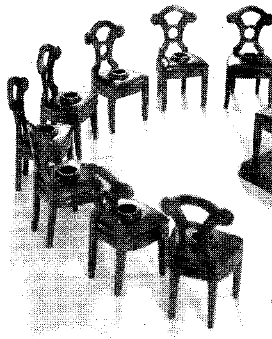
Leighton Meester and Blake Lively in "Gossip Girl."

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

Constance Billard is a nominally fictional version of Nightingale-Bamford, the all-girls private school that the series' author, Cecily von Ziegesar, graduated from, in 1988. (The books, eleven in all, were published between 2002 and this year and are set in the present. Von Ziegesar has obviously stayed on top of trends, and there aren't any embarrassing anachronisms, like Christian Lacroix pouf dresses; the books are all "Someone had rigged an iPod to the van der Woodsens' stereo system, and the insistent thrum of the new Arctic Monkeys album filled the air" and "'But I can't find my new navy polka-dot Ashley Tyler cover-up,' Blair whined.") Situating Constance Billard one block north of the real school was as far as von Ziegesar went to cover her tracks; she has said openly that the books are based on her experiences at Nightingale—and, importantly, on what she heard from her friends. Even in a world of insiders, there are outsiders—or, at any rate, sharp observers—and von Ziegesar channelled her observer's curiosity into the persona of Gossip Girl, who isn't a character, exactly; she's a presence, an omniscient stand-in for our voyeuristic selves. In the books, Gossip Girl chronicles online the activities of the half-dozen or so main characters, and her postings are interspersed with traditional narrative; on the TV show, Gossip Girl's reports are presented as voice-overs, by Kristin Bell, who was the eponymous teen-age detective and narrator in "Veronica Mars."

In addition to the books' being ripe for a TV series, what made people assume that "Gossip Girl" would be a success was the fact that one of the people behind it, Josh Schwartz, had created the Fox drama "The O.C.," which quickly became part of the teen-drama canon. (Less often mentioned as part of the "Gossip Girl" package, for no apparent reason, is Stephanie Savage, who co-developed the series with Schwartz and was also a writer and producer of "The O.C.") The two shows have a number of things in common: they're both about the hypocrisy and misery begotten by wealth—money, you'll be interested to know, will not make you happy—and about families sticking together, and about growing up and leaving home. There's drugs and drinking—an astonishing amount of drinking—and sex, but the sex is more talked about, thought about, and planned for than engaged in. "The O.C.," which ended earlier this year, was good for only two of its four seasons, but it was a much richer show than "Gossip Girl" seems to be so far—more serious and also more fun, and with a good actor, Peter Gallagher, to anchor the enterprise. "Gossip Girl" is not so lucky in that regard.

The beautiful Blair (Leighton Meester) and the beautiful Serena (Blake Lively, from "The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants") are BFFs, and have been since first grade, but they haven't been in touch since Serena went away to boarding school, a year ago. A young woman of mystery, Serena is now inexplicably back



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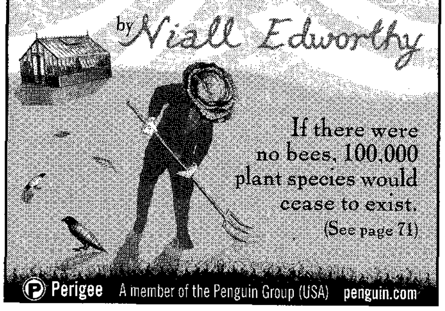

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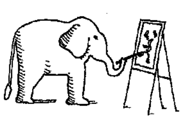

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in New York for her senior year; and as soon as she is spotted, in Grand Central, tongues are wagging and fingers are texting. What you need to know is that Serena slept with Nate (Chace Crawford), Blair's boyfriend, which Blair herself hasn't yet done. So ups and downs ensue. And that's pretty much all you need to know. The rest of it, I'm sorry to say, is fairly generic—if attractive. As is almost always the case in the CW's teen dramas, most of the actors are worthy of the Abercrombie & Fitch catalogue. There are several variants of unavailable mother (a self-absorbed one, a distant one, and an even more distant one); as for the dads, there's an embezzling one, a harsh one, and a cool, middle-class one, who has a couple of days' growth and a necklace and is against all things Upper East Side, though he's fine with his kids going to private schools there. In the book, the cool dad is a poetry editor who lives on West End Avenue and Ninety-ninth Street. That's the kind of detail that tells you that von Ziegesar knows her stuff; to a New Yorker, the address telegraphs a lot about the character. In the show, the cool dad is a former rock musician who runs a struggling art gallery and lives in the hip Brooklyn neighborhood of Williamsburg, which doesn't seem quite right, and neither does the fact that some of the Brooklyn scenes are clearly shot in the wrong neighborhood. (Hilariously, the Brooklyn of the TV show is so benign and "Dawson's Creek"-y that a friend of the family habitually enters the apartment through an unlocked window.) Given these types of characters, there is a lot of soap opera, but there's no center to the show, and no sense of life as it's actually lived. There's rarely a moment of quiet in "Gossip Girl"—perhaps because its content seems to be secondary to its primary purpose of marketing pop songs, which are heard throughout.

New York can prop a show up—there's always something to look at, and so many layers of references to draw on—and "Gossip Girl," to a great extent, coasts on its setting, on preëstablished meanings. There's even a dream involving Audrey Hepburn and "Breakfast at Tiffany's." But there isn't much more than meets the eye here, despite the conspiratorial, knowing tone of the narrator; Gossip Girl tells us at the beginning of each episode, in a singsong, actressy tone, that she's our "one and only source into the scandalous lives of Manhattan's élite." She sounds like a teen-age Donald Trump, full of hot air and clichés about New York. The fun of the Gossip Girl of the books is that she has a real voice. She's blunt and not very nice, but she's on to herself, and she doesn't take herself too seriously.

I've been told that some kids in Manhattan's private-school population resent the way they've been depicted in the show, but that tells me that there's some accuracy to von Ziegesar's portrait. (Or maybe they just want to distance themselves from a Nightingale graduate who can write a paragraph like this: "There was a box of orange Tic Tacs in her pocket with only one Tic Tac left. Serena fished the Tic Tac out and put it on her tongue, but she was so worried about her future, she could barely taste it.") Of course, the girls in the show, and many of the girls who watch the show, are also reading Tolstoy, playing sports, tutoring grade-schoolers, writing plays, and raising money for good causes (and, yeah, many of them have already been to Europe more times than you've been to the supermarket). "Gossip Girl"'s viewers are well aware that the show is over-the-top escapism, a nice break from homework. Underneath its hard shell of dirty talk and conspicuous consumption and boozing and attitude, it is family-friendly, a kind of guide through the trials of high school and bad parenting, an "S.A.T.s and the City."

"Gossip Girl" has indeed become a hit, though not a megahit. It's now possible—and necessary—for Nielsen to count viewings of shows that people have recorded on their DVRs and watched within seven days, and "Gossip Girl"'s ratings jump from not so hot to respectable when those figures are taken into account. It's also the top TV show on iTunes at the moment. It was on the basis of these two elements of our brave new multiplatform world that the CW decided recently to order a full season of "Gossip Girl." Advertisers' being drawn to a show that sells well on iTunes wasn't even a concept until a couple of years ago. All the new ways of delivering shows to viewers are starting to pan out for the studios and the networks that own them. That they continue to balk at sharing a larger fraction of their stupendous wealth with writers—the people who make that wealth possible—is as mystifying as it is sensationally wrong. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

TANGLED UP

"I'm Not There" and "The Mist."

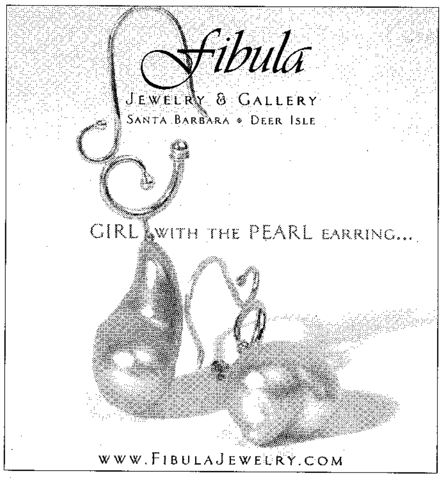
BY ANTHONY LANE

The new Todd Haynes film, "I'm Not There," is not a documentary about Bob Dylan. His name is in the opening credits of the movie ("inspired by the music & many lives of Bob Dylan"), and his face looms in closeup at the end, cheeks sucking and swelling to the rhythm of a harmonica, but those are his only appearances. Nor is the film a straightforward dramatization of his existence, or even a slice of it; anyone expecting a Dylanite echo of "Backbeat," which retold the story of the Beatles' time in Hamburg, may have reason to be aggrieved. Ian Hart played John Lennon in that film, with recognizable punch and wit, but nobody here plays the actual Dylan. Instead, six actors take six different roles and run with them, each role being a loopy, meandering riff on the *sort* of life that Dylan has had, or could have had, or conjured in his songs. It makes "Yellow Submarine" look like a miracle of sober narrative.

Cate Blanchett as one of the Dylanesque characters in Todd Haynes's new movie.

COURTESY ED LACHMAN/THE WEINSTEIN COMPANY (2007)

Take the first example. A young, guitar-toting black kid (Marcus Carl Franklin) hops a freight train, finds a pair of hoboes, and declares that his name is Woody Guthrie. The time is the late nineteen-fifties. The kid shows up throughout the film, and we have the pleasure of seeing him perform—an eager, unfeigned pleasure, because Franklin can really sing, and he gets the chance for a brisk trio on a front porch, with none other than Richie Havens plucking away beside him. The question is: What is the kid doing in a film about Dylan? Well, you could view him as an oblique comment on Dylan's own reverence for Guthrie (as evidenced by "Song to Woody," on his début album), and on the debt that he owed to a particular strain of black music, but that's the problem: this "Woody Guthrie" is a comment, not a character. We are kept so busy trying to weigh the burden of cultural meaning that the poor kid has to carry that we never find time to grant him, as a person, anything but the most



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fleeting of existences. Like the other pseudo-Dylans who populate the story, he is there for a purpose, and behind the gleam of the film—Haynes has an exacting eye for décor, and the rural American past is drenched in sap greens and warm tobacco browns—there is no mistaking a hard, Brechtian sense of dramatis personae being used like tools.

Nonetheless, Marcus Carl Franklin, operating on sheer brio, makes more of an impact than most of his fellow-performers. Four of the other Dylan figures, all played by capable actors, are left stranded in the luscious mire of Haynes's fantasies. Ben Whishaw, who starred in the malodorous "Perfume," is interviewed as though under arrest, and gives his name as "Arthur Rimbaud." (To help us connect the dots, a version of Rimbaud's most famous phrase, "I is someone else," is uttered later by another character. Those in the know will feel smug; everyone else will be baffled.) Christian Bale, as authentically gaunt as the folk-era Dylan, plays Jack Rollins, who shows up in New York and transfixes the musical scene; toward the end, he emerges as a born-again Christian pastor in California—a deliberate overstretch by Haynes, since Dylan, though he turned to God in the late seventies, was never a minister. Then, there is Heath Ledger, who plays an actor named Robbie, who himself plays the fractionally Dylan-like hero in "Grain of Sand," a nonexistent Hollywood film, and whose wooing of a French painter (Charlotte Gainsbourg) takes up an unlikely slice of the action. Got that? Just as you're wondering how much farther from the art of Bob Dylan this movie is prepared to stray, up pops Richard Gere.

This, I fear, is where my patience snapped, and I doubt whether that of Dylan fans will prove any more elastic. Gere plays Billy—a nod to Billy the Kid, and thus to the music that Dylan contributed to Sam Peckinpah's "Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid" (1973), in which he also acted. But the Gere rendition is little more than a lazy gloss on the legend of the vanishing West; as a rule, any film that offers cameos to circus performers and random zoo animals has reached the point at which invention becomes desperation. The problem for "I'm Not There" is not one of credibility (after all, these tales are meant to be tall) but of what authority a movie retains when its component parts fly off in different directions. Dylan, to judge by the ardor of his admirers, is indeed inexhaustible, in his gifts as in his changes of tack, and one quite understands why Haynes—who co-wrote the film with Oren Moverman—should have scorned a plain bio-pic. To come at a stubborn subject from multiple angles was a smart move, but Haynes is so enthralled by the stylistic opportunities that his plan affords, as he was in the fifties-hued "Far from Heaven," that he ends up more interested in the angles than in anything else, leaving the elusive Dylan, once again, to slip away.

If the new film does cohere, for a while, that is thanks to Cate Blanchett, who, armed with curly wig and shades, delivers Jude Quinn, the most gripping of the Dylans on display. She looks like Elizabeth I after a long night out with Walter Raleigh and his packet of virgin smokes. We see Jude in London in the mid-sixties, hazy with drugs, larking with the Beatles (in a breakneck homage to "A Hard Day's Night"), and generally treading the ground that was covered by D. A. Pennebaker in "Don't Look Back" (1967), his concert-tour documentary. The best thing in the film is the probing of Jude's past and conscience by a British journalist (Bruce Greenwood), whose questions about the responsibility that the artist—any artist, from Dylan on down—bears to the wider world are left blowing in the wind.

Blanchett seems to yield herself to the project with more gusto and curiosity than the others, as if there were truths about Dylan that need to be unearthed, not merely toyed with, and she is unafraid to remind us of what a pain the man could be, especially when stoned, but even she has to wrestle with the camp knowingness of the script ("I'm the only one with any balls") and, more alarming, with the flimsiness of the context. "Live your own time, child. Sing about your own time," the young black Dylan is told, and the instruction could stand as the motto of the movie; so why palm off on us a few stock-footage shots of Martin Luther King, Jr., mass riots, and Nixon's declaring an end to the war in Vietnam? How can we judge Dylan's place in history, when the history feels paper thin? "I'm Not There" is bravely conceived, but some of the reconstructions of the folk movement could have come straight out of "A Mighty Wind," and what exactly Haynes adds to "Don't Look Back," or to Martin Scorsese's majestic "No Direction Home: Bob Dylan," released two years ago, only Dylanologists can tell. The rest of us, far from seeing the light, may even be led to ask, heretically, what all the fuss was about. So who is this movie for?

In the second scene of "The Mist," we see mist rolling across a lake. A little boy asks his father, "What is it, Daddy?" "Mist," he replies. I do like movies that keep me fully abreast of all the relevant information, and Frank Darabont's new film certainly fits the bill. Adapted from a novella by Stephen King, it stars Thomas Jane as David Drayton, a poster artist whose Maine home is, like most of the surrounding area, badly damaged in an electrical storm. After the tempest comes the mist, and out of the mist comes the stuff of nightmares, complete with stings, jaws, giant tentacles, acidic webs, and a host of optional extras not covered by Drayton's insurance. He does the only sensible thing, which is to leave his wife behind and hole up in the local supermarket with his son Billy (Nathan Gamble) and Norton (Andre Braugher), the attorney next door.

As it turns out, Norton's job is to represent the voice of reason. Decrying all the talk of tentacles as mischievous delusion, he and a few fellow-rationalists step out into the mist, giving everyone else the chance for a debate—slightly surprising, given the circumstances—on moral philosophy. The delicious, unattached schoolteacher (Laurie Holden) considers mankind decent at heart, whereas the small, existentialist checkout clerk (Toby Jones) feels that, "as a species, we're fundamentally insane." Mind you, it's not long since Jones played Truman Capote in "Infamous," so he may be arguing from unstable premises. "The Mist" is itself a supermarket of B-movie essentials, handsomely stocked with bad science, stupid behavior, chewable lines of dialogue, religious fruitcakes, and a fine display of monsters. One of these, toward the end, is cathedral-high, and the characters gaze upon it with genuine wonder, although its low bellowing suggests that it may have eaten too many fruitcakes at one sitting. The finale—a cruel Stephen King joke—is designed to convince us that we have been watching something more than hokum, but I am unpersuaded. The line "There's something in the mist!" is a straight lift from "There's something in the fog!," spoken twenty-seven years ago in John Carpenter's "The Fog," and it shows that these movies are not meditations on the tragedy of human overreach. They're weather reports. Isn't that scary enough? ♦

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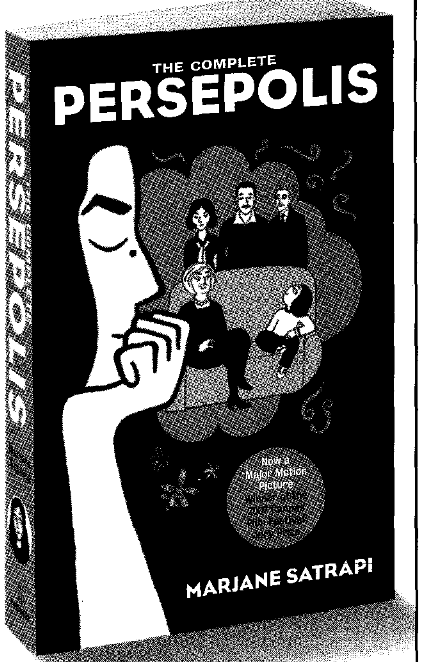

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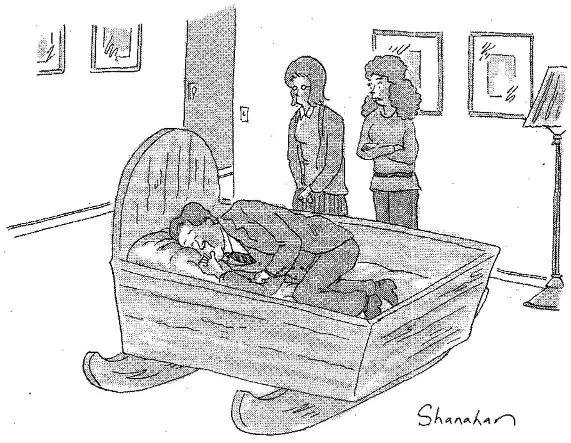
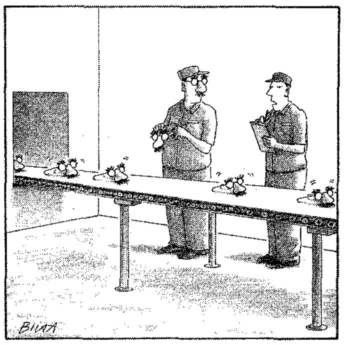
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Leo Cullum, must be received by Sunday, November 25th. Finalists in the November 12th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the December 10th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"If he wakes up, you can give him a Martini."
Alan Schulman, Richmond, Va.



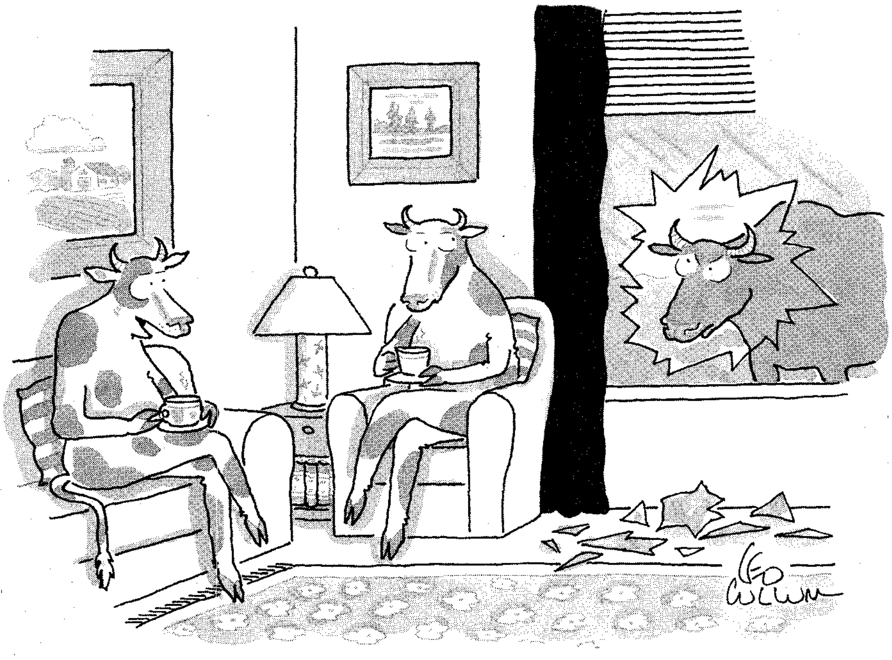
THE FINALISTS

"This part of the job is easy—it's the whoopee-cushion testing that annoys me."
Eric Lindstrom, Ithaca, N.Y.

"Yeah, that one's funny, too. Next."
James Keegan, Milton, Del.

"I'm just glad we don't make lingerie."
Steven Scher, Bronx, N.Y.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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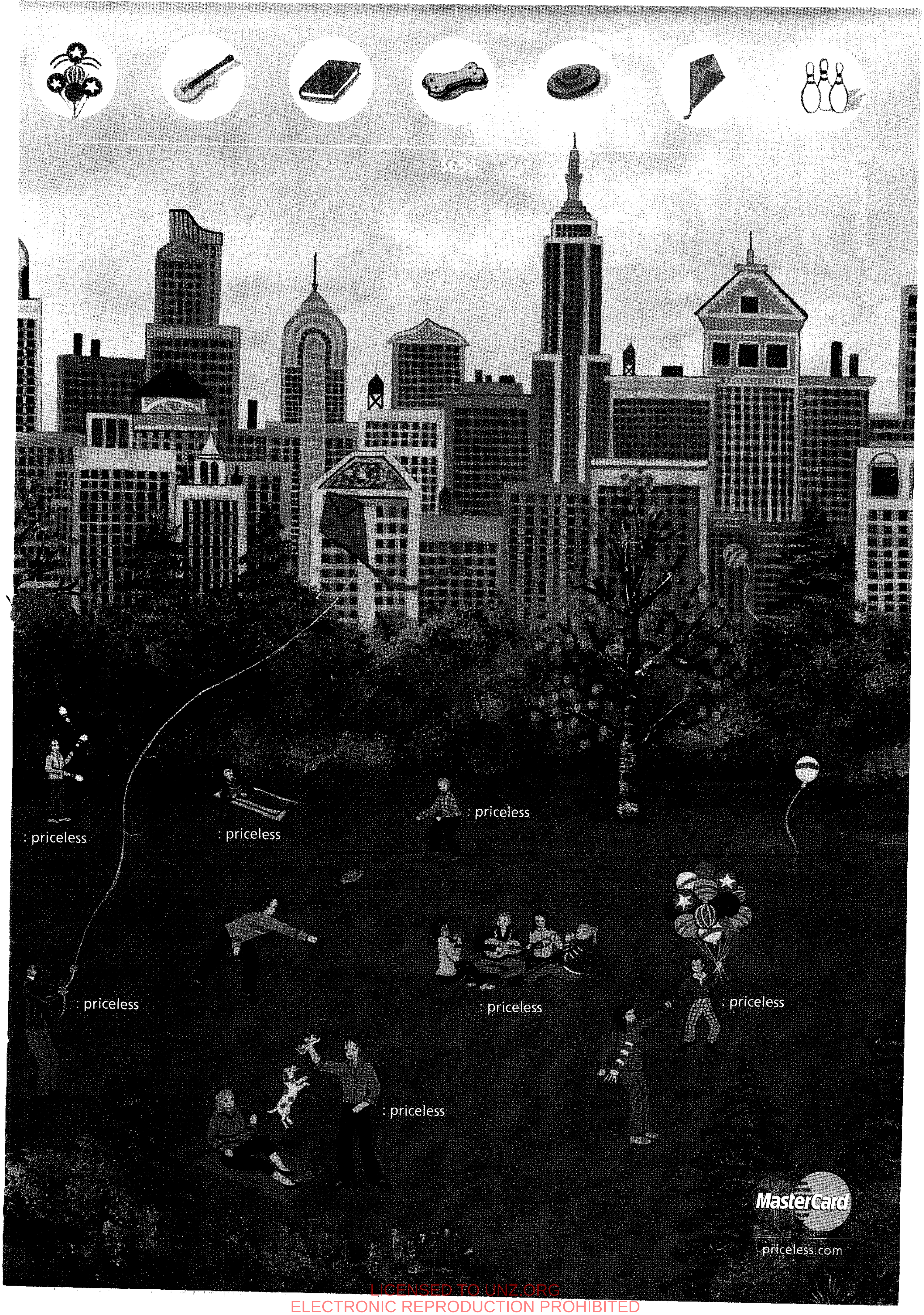
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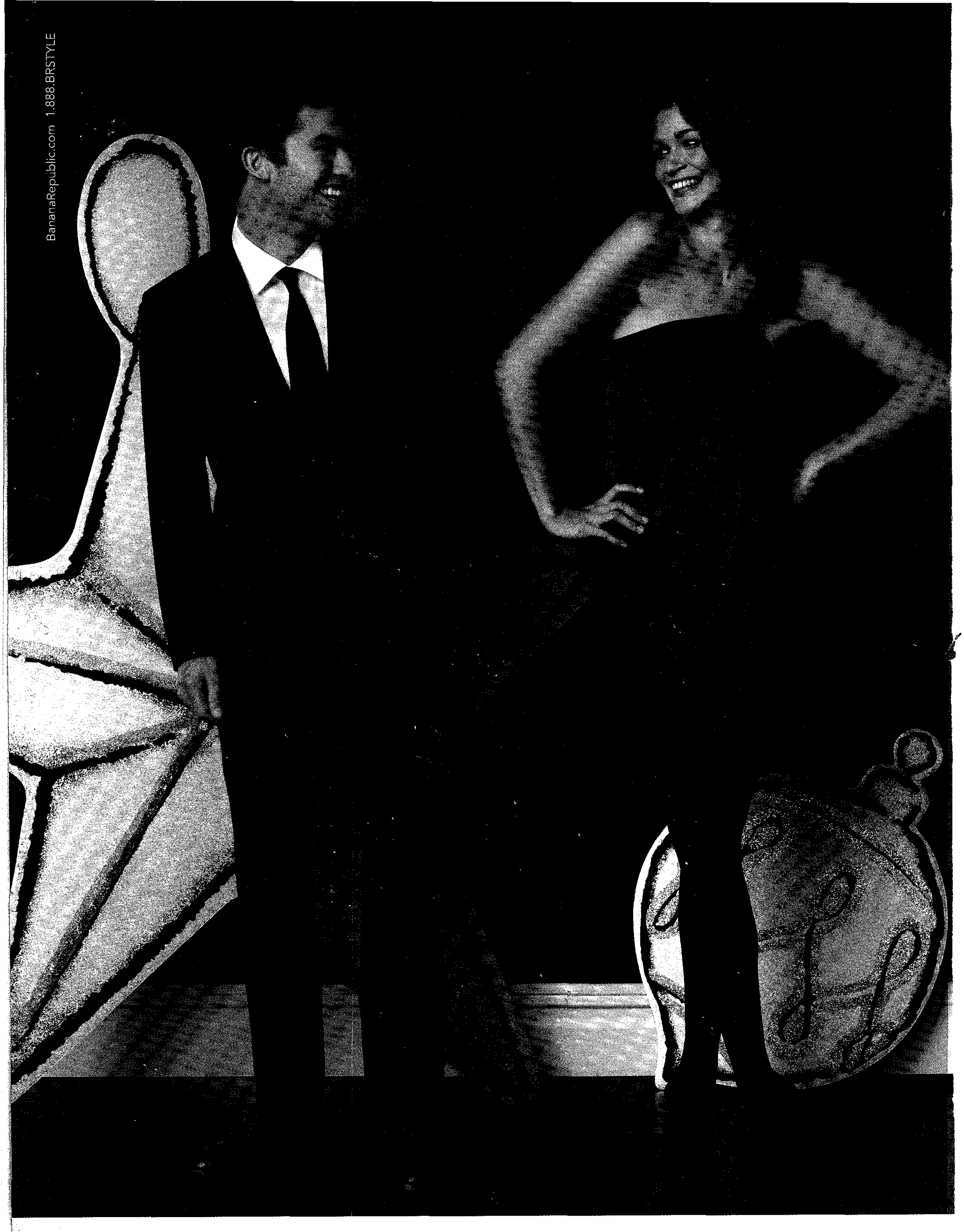
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